

Reframing Africa?

Reflections on Modernity and the Moving Image

Edited by Cynthia Kros,
Reece Auguiste and Pervaiz Khan

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Preface

The *Reframing Africa* project is a research initiative based at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) in partnership with the Market Photo Workshop in Newtown, Johannesburg. The project has hosted four annual workshops to date with several seminars and screenings in between.[1]

Reframing Africa started with discussions between Pervaiz Khan, who is on the academic staff in the Wits School of Arts, and Cynthia Kros, who until recently had also been a member of staff in the School, heading the Division of Arts, Culture and Heritage Management, and who was a historian by training and had been a long-term member of the History Workshop – a research initiative founded at Wits in the aftermath of renewed trade union militancy and the Soweto Uprising of 1976. Our ideas were given momentum and the necessary support as our discussions attracted the attention of our colleagues both at Wits and other universities in South Africa and abroad.

The project that ultimately became *Reframing Africa* was prompted by our discovery of an event that had happened a hundred years before in our own neighbourhood. It is a discovery that has been documented by several scholars so perhaps it is surprising that it took us until 2016 to make it. Perhaps we had read about it in some of the published histories of cinema in South Africa without registering that it had happened so close to the Wits campus. On 11 May 1896 Carl Hertz, having brought a projector with him from England, screened the first film shown on the continent at the Empire Palace of Varieties, which was located on Commissioner Street, Johannesburg. Having established the proximity of the location gave us a powerful sense that history had been invisibly unfurling its buds just a few blocks away.

1 We would like to express appreciation for the award of a portion of a Mellon Research Grant and to the Heads of the respective units at Wits who facilitated this, namely Prof. Brett Pyper of the Wits School of Arts and Prof. Noor Nieftagodien of the History Workshop. We are also grateful for the publishing subsidy awarded by the National Institute of Humanities and Social Sciences, which has helped to make this publication possible. Support from colleagues has been very stimulating and invaluable and we would also like to thank all participants in the *Reframing Africa* workshops over several years.

By 2016, we had become much more consciously attuned to rustlings in the undergrowth. Student protests had once again called our attention to things that were wrong in the country and the universities. Some of our colleagues responded to student calls for decolonisation by proposing new curricula that gave more prominence to African scholars and extra-European ways of making knowledge. And this gave us serious pause for thought. How could we be in this position so long after the much-celebrated official demise of apartheid? What would a radical transformation of the curriculum that allowed for a full appreciation of, and engagement with, African intellectual work entail? In our position as teachers and scholars we turned first to the things we believed we could do something about – namely the curriculum and pedagogy.

At the same time, a long-term friend and colleague, Aboubakar Sanogo, had been contributing through his work for the Federation of Pan African Cinema (FEPACI) to an initiative aimed at preserving and restoring the archive of African cinema and, crucially, also enabling access to it on the African continent.

Our first workshop in the *Reframing Africa* series took place in 2017. During the workshop a disturbing ignorance on the part of the majority of the participants concerning African filmmakers was revealed. Few could match faces to names or locate them accurately on a map of Africa. The case that Sanogo made for the cultivation of archival consciousness as a necessary element for driving a continental-wide campaign to save the archive and to locate it within the reach of ordinary African residents was persuasively made.

These then are our two principal motives for initiating the *Reframing Africa* series: thinking creatively about how to transform the curriculum, not only in what is usually known as Film Studies, but also in the Social Sciences and, hopefully, the Humanities as a whole; and raising general archival consciousness as a way of rallying support for the urgent task of preserving the archive of African cinemas or as we have latterly come to call it, of the moving image.

Since our first workshop, whose proceedings are reflected in this book, we have had three more, which we hope to write about in future publications. Each convening has shown us in different ways the extraordinary power of the archive to illuminate the workings of colonialism and modernity, the covert but often brilliant resistance of their subjects, the beauty and power of films made by African filmmakers in the post-independent period, and the range of approaches and methods adopted by contemporary scholars, filmmakers, photographers and artists who find in the archive rich resources to work and create with to make new stories and histories.

There are several significant scholarly books and articles about African cinema/s that examine the ways in which particular films made in the colonial or apartheid periods sought to serve certain ideologies or visions of circumscribed nations, or about how African films in the post-independent period have tried to grapple with the circumstances confronting their subjects. The scholarly

literature also provides us with analyses of how African filmmakers have had recourse to the past before colonialism while being fully cognisant of the difficulties of recalling histories that bear the indelible stains of what came afterwards.

The scholarly literature is mostly very valuable, but our project is slightly different. We are trying to estimate what belongs in the archives – there is a highly selective formal archive that will shelter what are necessarily costly restored versions of what are considered to be the classics of African cinema. For better or worse, it is not possible to save and restore every film made by an African filmmaker. But we recognise that the participants in our workshops also draw on a multitude of other archives – home movie footage, institutional documentary material, photographs hoarded and then sometimes discarded, filmic material from now discredited or forgotten regimes and, increasingly, voluminous digital materials – and we have encouraged and, we like to think, facilitated exchanges about how the archive feeds our present-day work as theorists and practitioners.

Reframing Africa is at root a project about the African archive broadly defined. It asks questions pertaining to this archive as a repository of historical knowledge, its systems of classification, and what strategies should be developed to ensure its preservation in light of state negligence. In addition, this project also seeks to explore how audio-visual artists, filmmakers and scholars can use archival materials to enrich their creative work. In the process it seeks to offer African audiences a sense of how their historical location has, in part, been shaped by the archives through systems of representation. This raises the question of what might happen if Africans were to imaginatively project themselves into the future as custodians of the African archive. The thorny issue of the conservation of African archival materials is today even more urgent in light of the devastating fire at the University of Cape Town in April 2021 in which approximately 20 000 films were destroyed. This incalculable loss underscores the urgency with which the digitisation of archival materials must be integrated into every aspect of archiving practice and why it is important that Africa produces a new generation of dedicated archivists who will become the custodians of the continent's material culture. Finally, we have begun to consider how we might discharge our duty to the archive of the future.

The present book tends to have an overall focus on the South African cultural formation, and in particular cinema in relation to the archives. This is not an accidental occurrence as the project itself was first conceived in South Africa and, as we have already explained, the first *Reframing Africa* workshop was held at Wits, with the majority of participants being from South Africa. However, since its inception the project has rapidly evolved to acknowledge the undesirability of what are, after all, artificial borders, as it seeks to make deeper connections across the continent and the African diaspora.

Subsequent workshops, especially the one held in October 2020 in a virtual space, were able to open much more to Africa (in its broadest sense) as well as to cinemas, scholars and practitioners of the African diaspora. The emergence of this more expansive field started addressing forgotten histories of Pan-Africanism and of networks that have fallen out of the scope of conventional narratives and historical accounts.

Reframing Africa also expanded in another way. It began as a research project focused primarily on the archive of African cinemas, the statement being couched in the plural to underline the heterogeneity of Africa's cinematic forms and practices. With the further commitment of colleagues from the visual arts, the purview of the project expanded to account for the moving image beyond the filmic medium, and to incorporate the photographic image and image-making on multiple audio-visual platforms. For example, in the 2020 *Reframing Africa* symposium there were substantial contributions pertaining to the archives of African music and sonic materials in general. These interventions in the debate about the status of the African archive were conducted in relation to conservation practices and the need for reactivating discourses of the archive beyond visual representation.

Reframing Africa is jointly hosted by the History Workshop, the Wits School of Arts (which houses the visual, digital and performing arts), both of which are part of Wits, as well as by the Johannesburg-based Market Photo Workshop, which lies in close physical proximity to, and has had various kinds of associations with the university over many years. The History Workshop and the Wits School of Arts committed to collaborating around the concept of art as research, which has taken off in many academies around the world. *Reframing Africa* is one of the products of this collaboration.

Some scholars may be surprised by the alignment of the variety of arts taught at the Wits School and the Photo Workshop with an organisation, namely the History Workshop, which is more readily associated with radical revisions of South African history. But, in fact, in its early years, the History Workshop was deeply involved with the arts and artists. For the History Workshop, its current uptake of the idea of the arts as a medium of research, and as a way of disseminating findings and encouraging broader participation, is in some ways a reaffirmation as well as an extension of its early principles. One of the Workshop's main commitments when it was established in 1977 was to initiate the democratising of historical knowledge. Influenced by contemporary intellectual trends on the left and driven by the anti-apartheid convictions of its founders – themselves young and impatient with the conservatism of the academy – these activist/intellectuals wanted to engage with what they called the 'ordinary' people on the other side of the ivory fortification. Eminent sociologist, the late Belinda Bozzoli, who was one of the founders of the Workshop, described the 'Open Days' that were held in the first decade of the

Workshop's life in a chapter published in a collection titled *History from South Africa: Alternative Visions and Practices* (Bozzoli 1991).[2]

At their height, the Open Days brought thousands of people from Johannesburg's townships to the Wits campus and sometimes other venues, simultaneously organised by the Workshop. Although Bozzoli does not put it quite this way, what the History Workshop was doing in its Open Days entailed acknowledging and participating in forms of making knowledge that were not the university historian's usual fare. These included music, song, theatre, visual art, photography and slide shows, the last being at the forefront of educational technology in those days.

The Market Photo Workshop, an important partner in *Reframing Africa,* trains students from materially disadvantaged backgrounds in the history and practices of photography. But although its training is practically orientated, it would be a mistake to think of the Workshop only as a technical or vocational college in the narrowest sense. Some of the most perceptive commentaries on the deficits of the archive at the *Reframing Africa* workshops have come from Market Photo Workshop students. Several of their presentations have illustrated how photographs, as well as the singular powers of the camera when it is recruited to do the work of investigation and revisualisation, are able to stand in for histories that the archive has failed to capture because its narrow-minded custodians did not deem certain subjects worthy of inclusion or, indeed, actively spurned them. Sipho Gongxeka's presentation at the 2019 *Reframing Africa* workshop was a wonderful example. Building on eclectic sources of evidence, Gongxeka created an imagined visual late twentieth-century Queer township archive to fill an aching void.

The Editors, May 2022

Reference

Bozzoli, Belinda. 1991. 'Intellectuals, Audiences and Histories: South African Experiences, 1978–88.' In Joshua Brown, Patrick Manning, Karin Shapiro, Jon Weiner, Belinda Bozzoli and Peter Delius (eds), *History from South Africa: Alternative Visions and Practices*, 209–232. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

2 Belinda Bozzoli, one of the founders of the History Workshop, was a highly respected scholar. She passed away on 5 December 2020.

01

The Reframing Africa Audio-Visual Project

Cynthia Kros, Reece Auguiste and Pervaiz Khan

A project concerning the African archive

The name of the project, 'Reframing Africa', is predicated upon an established idea, which sometimes struggles to be heard, namely that 'Africa' is fundamentally a historical construction – a construct that has fixed and imprisoned its global presence as a geo-political and historical entity. As several scholars have pointed out, the very name 'Africa' as it is applied to the landmass we now think of as the African continent is a recent invention. It came into existence only a few hundred years ago with European imperial voyages of exploration, colonisation and economic extraction. This book proposes to address some of the ways in which Africa as a historical and cultural construct was produced through the medium of cinema in which the moving image, and the archives that it produced, constituted a fundamental aspect of its becoming. Saër Maty Bâ in this volume calls it getting 'to the bottom of the Euro-American invention of Africa'.

Bâ's pronouncement is hardly surprising given the Eurocentric origin of this invention and the propensity to frame the continent as this repellent thing once in need of imperial governance and now requiring neo-colonial forms of regulation and representation. Racialised images of Africa still inform the discourses which frame Africa as a continent of impenetrable jungles and dire epidemics, inhabited by barbarians. In the twenty-first century these images are still prevalent, in addition to those of chronic poverty, civil wars and failed states – images that fuel the popular imagination as we were recently reminded

by former US President Trump's reference to the continent and presumably the global South in general as 'shithole countries'. The contributors to this volume are far from the first to observe this phenomenon or to be driven by the need to change the way in which Africa is perceived, understood or 'framed'. Instead, the term 'reframing' rather than 'reframe' was chosen to suggest that the work of re-viewing and recreating Africa is in a constant state of impermanence. It's always in a state of becoming – a process contingent upon a multiplicity of historical, political and cultural factors, both within and external to it. The *Reframing Africa* project situates itself as playing a critical role in what is obviously a much broader political and cultural endeavour. In ways that should become more evident in the course of this book, the initiators of this project are working with a multiplicity of scholars and moving-image artists who are engaged in their own archival projects through which they endeavour to rethink and reposition Africa in innovative epistemological frames. This ongoing partnership has consistently deepened our collective understanding of the often complex and dynamic relationships between colonialism, modernity, the moving/still image and the formation and reconstitution of African identities in relation to these historical forces.

While the *Reframing Africa* project acknowledges the extraordinarily destructive effects of colonisation, it would nonetheless, be prudent to draw attention to the caution Bâ offers in Chapter Four. He is wary of overemphasising the enduring impact of colonialism, despite its violence and destructive impulses, which lately, he argues, have turned inward. The era of full colonial hegemonic control was comparatively brief when considered in the context of aeons of African historical development, cultural achievement and the production of complicated knowledge systems that preceded the arrival of Europeans.

It is against this broader trajectory of 'pre-colonial' history that the reception of colonial cinema in which Europeans were portrayed as innately superior to Africans must be assessed. Meaning, the idea that African audiences were ideologically compliant to the visual edicts of colonial cinema does not sufficiently account for the diversity in African audience reception practices. Conversely, analysis that focuses on the myriad ways that audiences negotiated colonial moving images and the reasons they quite often rejected dichotomous representations of European supremacy and African submissiveness could help delineate the complexity of African reception practices. African reception practices were evidently fluid, anarchic and sometimes oppositional during the colonial era, which may suggest that their experiences of self and community were generally rooted in autochthonous histories such as those that exist in indigenous and other modalities of knowing and doing that were antithetical to the colonial enterprise. For example, though the Tarzan narrative first emerged in *Tarzan of the Apes* (1918), directed by Scott Sidney, it was not until the arrival of *Tarzan the Ape Man* (1932), directed by W.S. van Dyke, that this movie

franchise began its globalised march in penetrating Africa, the Caribbean and other colonial outposts. This narrative trope was one of the popular entry points for cinematic images of the African continent. However, responses to the Tarzan franchise, based on the novels by Edgar Rice Burroughs, were not uniform or for that matter monolithic.

For example, Ghanaian/British filmmaker and artist John Akomfrah recalls, as a young boy, watching these films in Accra along with his friends and laughing at the image of a white man who could fly through the air using jungle vines and kill wild beasts single-handedly. Whereas, Trinidadian/British filmmaker and academic Colin Prescod, in conversation with Pervaiz Khan, had clear memories of feeling shame and disgust at seeing the Tarzan films as a youngster in Trinidad.[1]

These two cases, among probably millions of other such experiences, suggest that not all colonial subjects were ideologically receptive to these visual tropes. In effect, Akomfrah and Prescod, although located in different parts of the empire, with different reactions to these movies, both refused to submit to being constituted by the Tarzan narrative as subjects of the Crown. Akomfrah's and Prescod's responses indicate that colonial subjects were also active agents with the ability to arrive independently at critical readings and interpretations of these films. Their experiences serve as a counter-narrative to the erroneous view that Africans were mere receptacles for ideologically infused colonial representations, and underscores the need for more historically informed analysis in African film reception studies such as that contained in *Flickering Shadows: Cinema and Identity in Colonial Zimbabwe* by James M. Burns (2002). In this important text, Burns demonstrates the struggles and failures of, among other things, the African Film Unit and the Rhodesian Information Services' Film Unit to secure colonialist-preferred readings or interpretations of the movies that were screened to Africans in cities and rural districts across colonial Zimbabwe. Though Burns's focus is on the operations of colonial cinema in Zimbabwe and audience responses to its cultural machinations, it must be noted that Burns's intervention is in line with developments in film reception studies globally.

Outside the African context the following path-breaking texts have helped reorientate readers from textual readings of films to the historical experiences of audience film reception practices: *Perverse Spectators: The Practices of Film Reception* by Janet Staiger (2000); Barbara Klinger's (1997) acute analysis in the article 'Film History Terminable and Interminable'; *Early Cinema in Russia and its Cultural Reception* by Yuri Tsivian (2013); *Rural Cinema: Exhibition and Audiences in a Global Context*, edited by Daniela Gennari, Danielle Hipkins et al. (2018); and *Audiences: Defining and Researching Screen Entertainment*

1 These are memories of friends related to us by Pervaiz Khan.

Reception (The Key Debates: Mutations and Appropriations in European Film Studies), edited by Ian Christie (2012). Unlike all these texts, however, Burns's (2002) theoretical and conceptual approach to the complexity of Zimbabwean film reception practices signifies a radical turn in research and scholarship in African cinema studies. Indeed, Burns's historical analysis constitutes a critical intervention in research, scholarship and interpretation of colonial cinema in the broader trajectory of African cinema studies, and should be embraced as a positive development in film scholarship. In addition to Burns's text, *Films for the Colonies: Cinema and the Preservation of the British Empire* by Tom Rice (2019) represents a growing field in contemporary African film scholarship.

Post-independence archive

To reiterate, this volume has a concern with the colonial archives or the archives of empire, which include not only moving images but also manuscripts, still photography and sound. However, it should be signposted here that *Reframing Africa is* also deeply concerned with the archive of African filmmakers and committed to developing strategies for its protection, promoting it and helping to ensure that it is accessible to those who reside on the African continent and have little opportunity to travel abroad. This concern is rooted in the crisis of the archiving of African films that were made by Africans in the post-independence era. It is not only specific to cinema. It stretches across the entire gamut of archival practices, such as digitisation of analogue films, scripts, production notes, institutional access, and the lack of either national or an African continental-wide strategy for the preservation of these fragile and often disintegrating materials. Eminent film scholar, Aboubakar Sanogo, was quite emphatic from the beginning of *Reframing Africa* about the duty not only to help preserve the archive of African cinema, but also to bring it to continental Africa. In a 2018 article on the Carleton University's website about Sanogo's role in creating a partnership between the African Film Heritage Project, the Pan-African Federation of Filmmakers (FEPACI) for whom he worked, and UNESCO and Martin Scorsese's Film Foundation World Cinema Project to consolidate African film preservation, Sanogo is quoted recalling not having been able to see the classic *Soleil Ô* made by Mauritanian filmmaker Med Hondo (1970) for many years until a print surfaced in Paris in 2006. Sanogo remarked, 'Even in Burkina, the capital city of African cinema, it wasn't available' (Carleton Newroom 2017).

For the most part, as Sanogo's acerbic comment suggests, the archive of African cinema is not available on the continent itself, or if it is, as John Akomfrah made the point in the 2020 *Reframing Africa* workshop, describing a visit he had made to the black and white film archive in Accra in Ghana, it is in an accelerated process of disintegration. At the same forum, participants heard the full story of saving Ousmane Sembène's legacy from film scholar and Sembène's biographer

Samba Gadjigo, who is also co-director with Jason Silverman of the acclaimed documentary *Sembène!* (2015) – itself an arduous archival project – and also with Silverman of the ongoing archival and restoration project called *Sembène Across Africa.*[2] In the last several years, *Reframing Africa* has collaborated with the latter in order to screen Sembène films at centres in South Africa. At the 2020 workshop, Gadjigo spoke memorably of realising that without decisive intervention, a large part of Sembène's legacy, including film reels and scripts would have been left to rot on the floor of his home in Dakar after the filmmaker's death. Gadjigo attracted criticism, even on that occasion, from one of the conference participants for organising the translocation of Sembène's personal archive to the Lilly Library at Indiana University in the USA. Gadjigo defended his decision with reference to the negligence of the Senegalese government and the urgency of the task at hand. Given the lack of institutional capacity, technical and financial resources and archivists with knowledge of contemporary archiving practices, bringing the archive home is evidently more difficult than many had realised. However, Gadjigo's biographical work and the film and screening projects that he has undertaken with Silverman offer alternative ways of thinking about how to protect and restore the archive, allow for its fecund proliferation and, as Sanogo has also urged, raise public consciousness about its historical importance and the urgency of rescuing African archival materials.

John Akomfrah, in conversation with Egyptian scholar and filmmaker Jihan El-Tahri,[3] also described his experience of entering the British National Archives in the period he and his colleagues in the Black Audio Film Collective were making *Handsworth Songs* (1986). He remarked sardonically that there had been no section signposted 'Black Lives'. They had, he explained, to create their own inventory and establish their own presence. Reflecting on their engagement with the British National Archives, Akomfrah remarked that the archive had been 'a means by which we secured our existence'. It had not automatically produced nor systematically catalogued the histories of black people's lives in Britain that the Collective was looking for to help explain the origin of the so-called Handsworth Riots in Birmingham. Akomfrah and his colleagues had to work with the archive and, in some senses, against it to find what they were looking for. But, in that very process they excavated the hidden narratives of Second World War black immigrant existence in the UK, narratives that spoke to experiences of black life absent from the official account.

Similarly, the African archive does not easily yield histories of African societies before colonisation. To complicate matters, we might add that it is by no means certain that there ever was a single, undisputed history. Some years ago, Mbye

2 For more information on this project, see, 'The Sembène Project'. http://www.sembenefilm.com/en/the-sembene-project

3 At the 2020 *Reframing Africa* workshop.

Cham published a reflective piece on what he observed was the proliferation over the last two decades of historical films made by Africans (Cham 2008). In this regard he mentioned: Med Hondo's *West Indies* (1979), Flora Gomes's *Mortu Nega* (1988), Madagascan Raymond Rajaonarivelo's *Tabataba* (1988), the Ghanaian Kwaw Ansah's *Heritage Africa* (1988), Black Audio Film Collective's *Testament* (1988), and director John Akomfrah and Ousmane Sembène's *Ceddo* (1977), *Emitai* (1971) and *Camp de Thiarope* (1988). After his enumeration of these works, Cham came to focus on the Sembène case and particularly the latter's *Ceddo* (1977). '*Ceddo*' is a Wolof word meaning outsiders – in the movie the Imam refers to them as 'infidels' – those who resisted the incursions of three historical forces, namely Euro-Christianity, Islam and European colonialism/ Atlantic Slave Trade. The narrative thread of Sembène's historical realist masterpiece revolves around the trajectory of these three forces, and the fate of Africans caught in and between these imperial incursions in the Senegalese Wolof state of Joloff before its final submission to Islam.

According to Cham, European and Islamic accounts of Senegalese history had to be purged of the 'fictions' introduced by these foreign forces, and, in the case of *Ceddo*, Islamic mythology in relation to the origin of Islam and its historical evolution in Senegal (Cham 2008). Cham follows a line of thought that holds that the 'official accounts' of African histories are in need of reconstruction, a process that is further advanced by the griots whose task it is to challenge official accounts and to reconstitute African histories through the prisms of the oral tradition – griots are the custodians of these histories and vectors through which historical narratives are retold. It is through the griot intellectual tradition that Cham considers Sembène's *Ceddo*. Cham notes that Sembène enters into a battle for history and around history. Official versions of the past, Western as well as Arabic are contested, revised, and/or rejected, and new, more 'authentic' histories are put in their place (Cham 2008). While there might be a possibility that official histories and myths may be shorn off and replaced with more 'authentic histories' – a pure history uncontaminated by later untruths – Cham's recourse to authenticity with its reliance on the operation of memory remains problematic. Certainly, memory exists but its contours, constitutive elements and phenomenological characteristics are often slippery and unstable.

It is instructive at this point, to turn to Sembène himself, in an interview conducted by Sada Niang and Samba Gadjigo on the occasion of the 13th Pan-African Festival of Cinema (FESPACO) at Ouagadougou in 1993. Sembène, a founding figure of FESPACO, at the time was screening his latest film *Guelwaar* as part of the opening ceremony, a film that he characterised as the state 'begging' from aid agencies in the Northern hemisphere (Sembène 1993). The film was proving controversial. At one point where Gadjigo is trying to get Sembène to commit himself concerning the meaning of his broader commentaries on social injustice – 'Are you saying …?' – Sembène answers: 'It is

up to you to analyse it and make up your mind on it' (Niang and Gadjigo 1995, 175). Later in the interview, Sembène is even clearer about not wanting to adopt the position of wise soothsayer or griot (a role often attributed to him) or, in Wolof, *gewel*. He says: 'I constantly question myself. I am neither looking for a school nor for a solution but asking questions and making others think' (Niang and Gadjigo 1995, 176). Sembène does not seem to have believed – at least by this point in his career – that he was in the business of revealing a pure Wolof past that had been contaminated by the self-justificatory myths spun by outsiders. Firstly, what he was asking for from his audiences was active intellectual engagement with his material. Secondly, it is clear in the same interview, in response to Niang's observations about the elements of the African diaspora and of Pan-Africanism that are incorporated into *Guelwaar*, that Sembène in his later years unambiguously rejected the idea of ethnic or tribal purity. 'I no longer support notions of purity' (Niang and Gadjigo 1995, 176).

Although traces abound, Africans cannot realistically expect to be able to retrieve intact the long, rich and diverse histories that pre-dated colonisation. Indeed, Sembène's comment serves to remind Africans to be careful of making assumptions about the existence of stable ethnic identities or purity of form. In that sense, no archive is simply the repository of history in the way many might think and that applies even to well-maintained and thoroughly organised and inventoried archives. It is generally understood that everything that arrives from the past, whether by means of a formal archive in the sense of a dedicated building and associated infrastructure, or in the sense of a body of oral histories, has done so through various kinds of mediation and mediums of expression and dissemination. In all probability, these mediations began with elders taking the measure of the past in the present, sometimes disputing, for example, genealogies, the course of a battle, the motives of a king or the way things were done in the past. Often, as is the case with many historians, they were trying to extract lessons from history or to explain particular configurations or movements of people, or to guide the current ruler in making important decisions.[4]

As a result of these debates about pre-colonial historical spaces, identity, stability and notions of purity, it is imperative to embark on investigations of the archives with all senses alert, with intellectual rigour and a commitment to understanding the constitutive elements in the formation of the African archive(s).

4 See work done in the field of history and archive studies, particularly the edited volume that marked a turning point in the field published in 2002: *Refiguring the Archive*, edited by Carolyn Hamilton, Verne Harris, Jane Taylor, Michele Pickover, Graeme Reid and Razia Saleh. Also, published in 2022, *Archives of Times Past: Conversations about South Africa's Deep History* edited by Cynthia Kros, John Wright, Mbongiseni Buthelezi and Helen Ludlow.

But is this serious academic work?

The late Belinda Bozzoli (1991), a founding member of the Wits History Workshop, which many years later became a co-host of the *Reframing Africa* research initiative, insisted that the Wits History Workshop's occasional Open Days of the 1980s (that attracted thousands of people from Johannesburg and its surrounding townships to the university campus) constituted only one aspect of the Workshop's persona. While she welcomed a degree of democratisation in the production and dissemination of history – and, indeed, that was one of the Workshop's founding principles – she was also wary of handing over too much power to the people, fearing that in the process academic quality control would be forfeited. She stressed the importance of the academic project continuing to be conducted in closed seminars, as well as the ideal of intellectual autonomy. She worried about those academics who she thought had gone astray and become too caught up in popular movements, consequently, as she saw it, neglecting their primary responsibilities to rigorous research and scholarship (see Bozzoli 1991).

In the context of Bozzoli's concerns, it must be noted that the participants in the *Reframing Africa* project are aware that in some quarters of the academy there may be lingering scepticism about whether this project, even located as it is under the increasingly respectable 'art as research' rubric, is a truly scholarly endeavour. In response, it can confidently be stated that the numbers of non-academic practitioners that have joined and presented papers or works at the *Reframing Africa* workshops is inspiring for the depth and breadth of their scholarly and creative practices. Far from worrying that their inclusion might detract from the academic project, it is evident that their contributions have enriched the debate pertaining to the African archive and its many different forms of resonance.

It has been helpful and inspiring in presenting a scholarly and curricular rationale for the *Reframing Africa* project to return to the reflections of one of the founders of Cultural Studies in the UK, Stuart Hall (1932–2014), recalling the opposition he and his colleagues initially encountered from established scholars in English literature and for following some of the cues laid down by the Oxford scholar F.R. Leavis, in particular Leavis's interpretations of the English literary tradition in the context of cultural materialism. In making the shift from Leavis, it was Raymond Williams's seminal work *Culture and Society* (1983) and Richard Hoggart's *The Uses of Literacy* (1957) that provided the blueprint or central theoretical principles for what was to later evolve into Cultural Studies. Years later, in his 2017 posthumously published memoir *Familiar Stranger: A Life between Two Islands*, Hall recalled that 'Williams provided us with another way of reading the connections between the literary tradition, wider intellectual formations and ideas, social structures and the

general culture' (Hall 2017, 250). It was precisely this epistemic shift that was dismissed by members of the self-appointed custodians of the English literary tradition as lacking rigour.

Hall, Hoggart, Williams and their fellow travellers proposed a new and liberative theory of culture in relation to social movements, and deliberately turned away from the idea that a single-minded study of literary texts designated as belonging to the canon could deliver adequate insights into particular cultural and social formations. They wanted to go far beyond the narrow canon (the body of English literature considered to constitute the greatest works in the language), to not only engage with the writings of the hugely influential F.R. Leavis, who in the 1950s was grappling with questions of culture and cultural production in relation to literary texts, but to build upon the latter's achievements. Though they had disagreements with Leavis, as Hall explained, they nonetheless *did* follow Leavis insofar as they believed that culture 'lay at the very heart of social life' (Hall 1990, 14). To their critics, it seemed that Hall and his fellow pioneers of Cultural Studies were trespassing into domains of the academy that lay well beyond their field of expertise – domains like those that specialised in investigating the nature of economies and societies, and disciplines in the social sciences. Hall freely admitted that they 'did the rounds of the disciplines', but in the interests of more rather than less rigorous theorising (Hall 1990, 16) and that, indeed, they had left the precinct of the university 'to engage in some real problems out there in the dirty world' (Hall 1990, 17).

In 2016 when *Reframing Africa* was germinating, widespread student protests at universities in South Africa, among other pressing issues, had recently drawn attention once again to the persistence of the Eurocentric curriculum – to the near absence of Africa and Africans in university course content, and to the continued neglect of African ways of knowledge-making and African intellectuals. Relatively enlightened responses from parts of the academy included bringing the work of African scholars, writers and artists into course reading lists, giving prominence to African philosophies and offering courses on pre-colonial history. It is this confluence of ideas and debates about knowledge production rooted in historical context that helped inform discussions about how *Reframing Africa* might contribute to giving students and their teachers ideas about approaches to the study of the moving image in Africa, and to bringing African cinemas into conversation with works of African intellectuals in other cognate disciplines. In the process, students would be enabled to gain access to the diversity of visual representations in Africa and the African diaspora. This continues to be a priority.

Those who are engaged in teaching in South Africa know that for many students the material circumstances of their lives have not changed very much from the way they were for the generations before them. What they have learned is, for the most part, a history of repeated humiliation and exclusion.

To return to Sembène, how then do those teachers engender the kind of critical engagement with the archive that Sembène hoped for when he talked about his films to Niang and Gadjigo? At the same time, how might educationalists encourage African audiences of the remarkable films in the post-independence archive to recognise their own 'preoccupations', to use Sembène's word from the same interview with Niang and Gadjigo, as they are reflected on the screen and to find ways of talking and writing about their affective responses – what Sembène called, sympathetically, with reference to his audiences, their 'inner screams' (Niang and Gadjigo 1995)?

In summary, the *Reframing Africa* project and this edited collection is centred on the ontology of the African archive, its complicated histories of representation, its multifarious epistemic frames and its materiality as an object of research and critical inquiry that is connected to contemporary debates about African cinemas, emerging cultural practices in the visual arts, social movements in Africa and the African diaspora. Admittedly, the initial impulse about the archive has expanded well beyond the original notion of African cinema as an archival domain and, increasingly, participants understand that they carry heavy responsibilities as scholars and practitioners who will be among the makers of the future archive. The aims of *Reframing Africa*, put succinctly, are: to raise archival consciousness; to explore the archive with a view to understanding its importance to Africans; to allow for ideas of agency on the part of Africans both as makers and participants in film production and related visual arts, and as audiences; to engage with the work of African intellectuals through film and other visual mediums; to lobby along with other organisations to save the archive of the African moving image and to bring it back to the continent in some form that compromises neither its integrity nor its quality; to contribute to the ongoing process of remaking the university curriculum and to help fortify the initiatives of community media arts organisations that are engaged in various archival projects.

The structure of the book

The chapters that follow set an agenda for the *Reframing Africa* project concerning the archive of the moving image in Africa. Some of the pressing questions that have continued to drive the project remain a central focus: why is the archive of the moving image and African archival materials in general of such importance to the continent? What should scholars and artists be doing to/with/against the colonial archive? How should colonial inscriptions of Africans in the archive be interpreted/written and what could archives contribute to the (re)writing of histories of the moving image in Africa? What does the alternative archive of the moving image look like and how does it, or does it connote, not only technological shifts, but also radically transformed epistemologies? And:

what does all this mean in terms of developing and supporting critical pedagogies that answer to the needs of students on the African continent? The myriad issues that are addressed here are by no means comprehensive, as there are several considerable gaps and omissions, some of which the *Reframing Africa* project has begun to address in its subsequent workshops, such as historical enquiry into the African sonic archive. Nonetheless, the issues addressed here are framed and informed by a series of historically interconnected epistemes, disciplines, cinema histories and questions pertaining to the African archive. Together these have produced the multiple positioning of Africa and African subjects in relation to the moving image and the archives within which African identities are framed and constituted.

After a brief discussion about the seminal historical moment of the arrival of cinema in Africa south of the Sahara, an event that occurred not far from the campus of the University of the Witwatersrand, and drawing attention to its coincidence with the emergence of Johannesburg from mining camp to major metropolitan city, Chapter 2 begins to explore the relationship of cinema to colonialism/imperialism and modernity. It also references a substantial literature on African cinema within which we not only attempt to locate our project, but also to bring it into conversation with existing contributions in the field. Chapter 2 advances the argument that cinema inscribed itself quite comfortably into a pre-existing 'visual episteme' such as those articulated in early colonial photographic representations of African bodies as sites of cultural abjection and racial difference. Meaning, the colonial cinematic project was a logical extension of the representational and epistemological concerns of still photography and engravings.

Chapter 3 by Aboubakar Sanogo begins by lamenting the destruction of much of Africa's cinema heritage and the apparent lack of archival consciousness. Sanogo goes on to elucidate what it is that African cinema has to tell us about being African. Through distinguishing the 'archive' from the 'archival', he opens up a vision that broadens its meaning and potentially democratises its ownership. When it comes to the understanding of and ability to re-energise the past, Africans, it turns out, are far from being latecomers to the archival, in the way that Sanogo defines it. On this foundation, he makes a convincing case for what he calls 'Afro-Ciné Archival Studies' becoming part of an academic programme whose basic infrastructural and philosophical principles are, in fact, incipient. He then sets out the practical and theoretical tasks that lie ahead.

Chapter 4 is by co-author and co-editor of *De-Westernizing Film Studies* (2012), Saër Maty Bâ, who offers a critical approach, bringing questions of epistemology and methodologies and the nature of the discipline together. Drawing on his concentrated study of the topic, Maty Bâ considers how to stop seeing Film Studies through a 'Western lens' while avoiding some of the familiar traps that lie in wait for those who seek to define what it is to be

African or, indeed, to apply 'national' categories, which are, by their very nature, anachronistic, 'nations' being a product of modernity that is itself highly unstable and contradictory.

Chapters 5 and 6 specifically address the complexity of the colonial film archive as an object of philosophical, political, historical and cultural inquiry.

In Chapter 5, Malcomess asks both how the colonial project lends itself to film *and* how film lends itself to the colonial project through the cinematic apparatus. What images were selected and constructed so as to solicit the audience's racial imaginings? The corollary is to ask what is not projected, or what the audience is asked to project for itself that falls beyond the frame or non-diegetic space. Malcomess suggests that territoriality (in the sense of the making of territory) happens out of the camera's sight. This relies on the cinema's ability to suggest and gesture towards what is not seen. (See also Rice [2019, 6] for several reasons to take note of what is happening outside the frame.) Through implication, invisibility amounts to something vaster than what is visible or what is possible to render as visible. It is this cinematic process in relation to film reception practices that Deleuze brings into focus when he states:

> Narrative in cinema is like the imaginary: it's a very indirect product of motion and time, rather than the other way around. Cinema always narrates what the images movements and times make it narrate. If the motion's governed by a sensory-motor scheme, if it shows a character reacting to a situation, then you get a story. If, on the other hand, the sensory motor-scheme breaks down to leave disoriented and discordant movements, then you get other patterns, becomings rather than stories. (Deleuze 1995, 59)

One of Malcomess's case studies is an instructional film *K.A.R. Signals: A Film of Routine in a Remote Place* (1936). It was intended for the teaching of geography. However, what is intriguing, as her account makes clear, is that the British Empire is not represented to its future rulers/civil servants through grand vistas, but through the banal and the mundane. Geographical representation appears strangely flat except for the hills that form part of the natural topography. These limitations may have been due to a limited budget, but it seems likely that the film was also consciously restricting itself to the singularly unspectacular, everyday business of running the empire (see also Rice [2019]).

On the Colonial Film: Moving Images of the British Empire website, Rice (2008) notes that: 'At its largest extent in the aftermath of the First World War, the British Empire covered around 13 million square miles and governed some 458 million people.' Apparently, those responsible for preparing future administrators were mindful of their responsibility. The director of the Central Film Library at the

Imperial Institute in South Kensington, London, H.A.F. Lindsay, explained in a letter to *The Times* in May 1944 that the 'empire section' was in 'keen demand in schools throughout the United Kingdom' (Rice 2008).

The other films discussed by Malcomess in Chapter 5 – *Repairing the Broken Bridge at Frere* (1899) and *Rifle Hill Signal near Frere Camp* (1899) – are related to the South African War. Arguably this war and its aftermath were decisive for the direction which the soon to be united South Africa followed in the twentieth century. Compromises made in the course of concluding the Vereeniging Peace Treaty between the official adversaries laid the ground for national black disenfranchisement for the next 90 or so years. But, as Malcomess points out, the technology of the time was unable to capture much about the war itself. For the most part, only the moments in between could be filmed.

Nevertheless, apparently the appetite at home for seeing snippets that showed the movement of war machinery, soldiers at ease in the moments before combat, casualties being transported, or even fictionalised representations of episodes between Boer and British was huge. Implicit in these films are the operations of a visual spectacle. The apparent inevitability of the South African War became a key catalyst for the dramatisation of this event as spectacle.

Palesa Shongwe is an emerging scholar and independent filmmaker who, at the time of the 2017 conference, was a member of the academic staff in the Division of Film and TV in the Wits School of Arts. Her Chapter 6 addresses the question of what may be recouped concerning the original intentions of black actors, through a particular analysis of *De Voortrekkers* (1916), one of the films Bâ mentions in Chapter 4 – it is a famous (infamous) filmic recreation of the murder and aftermath of the trekker leader Piet Retief and his party, who had trekked in an attempt to move beyond the sphere of British colonial government at the Cape. On a visit to amaZulu king Dingane's capital, supposedly to celebrate the Zulu king's (probably fictional) allocation of land to the trekkers, the latter were ambushed and killed. The victory of surviving trekkers and reinforcements brought in from elsewhere in the country in a battle fought a few months later between trekkers and Dingane's regiments was later ascribed to God's intervention. To this day, the anniversary of the battle, which falls on 16 December, remains an almost sacred date on the calendar of those who identify with a trekker ancestry. The ANC-led government has tried, with limited success, to convert the public holiday into the more broad-based Day of Reconciliation.

Chapter 7 by Keyan Tomaselli and Anna-Marie Jansen van Vuuren reminds us powerfully that modernity was not something imposed in its totality on South Africans. It was selectively received and mediated. Much of Tomaselli and Van Vuuren's chapter is about how the analysts and writers of the early twentieth century tried to make sense of modernity and, in this case, of cinema and its potential.

With Chapter 8 by Dylan Valley, a young scholar and filmmaker who at the time of the first *Reframing Africa* conference was on the staff of the Division of Film and TV in the School of Arts at Wits, we turn to the intellectual engagement and filmmaking of South Africans in the more contemporary period. Valley claims that the genre of the web-series offers a level of creative and political freedom to filmmakers, which is as yet unprecedented. He proposes, while being well aware of potential pitfalls, that YouTube offers a way of 'sidestepping traditional gatekeepers'. Valley's focus is on a web-series titled *The Foxy Five* created by Jabu Nadia Newman. She was inspired to explore narratives of decolonisation and intersectionality after her experience as a member of the enthusiastic crowds that gathered to watch the statue of arch imperialist Cecil John Rhodes being summarily deposed from his plinth at the apex of the #RhodesMustFall Movement at the University of Cape Town (UCT) in early 2015.

Emerging scholar Emelia Steenekamp's analysis in Chapter 9 of alternative Afrikaans-speaking cinema causes her to offer a cynical response to its claims. A number of Afrikaans-medium films that are presented as alternative (meaning that they are not supportive of the old racial hierarchy and stereotypes) profess to tell the stories of black protagonists. She discusses *Sink* (2015), directed by Brett Michael Innes, and *Krotoa* (2017), directed by Roberta Durrant. But, Steenekamp argues that these films mostly end up indulging the guilt of the white protagonists and expressing the desire for some kind of transcendent merging of black and white to absolve them. Film makes such merging possible. Its visual trickery allows for the simultaneous occurrence of death and guilt-free rebirth.

One of the objectives of the *Reframing Africa* project is to recuperate in some measure a working model of Pan-Africanism. In Chapter 10, Egyptian filmmaker Jihan El-Tahri in conversation with Pervaiz Khan argues vigorously that the familiar division into North and Sub-Saharan Africa is an externally imposed one that should be discarded. For one thing, the familiar separation of the two Africas has served to obscure the crucial role that Egyptian cinema, which was deliberately cultivated as part of the nationalist project in the 1950s, played in inspiring African countries conventionally assigned to the sub-Saharan category, to address and challenge their own colonial legacies. The connections between the Nasser-led Egyptian state and leaders of the newly emerging independent states elsewhere in Africa have all but been forgotten. After describing the forms that some of these connections took, El-Tahri highlights her argument by referring to Egypt's exports to African independence/liberation movements in the early 1960s, including South Africa, among which she lists guns, Pan-Africanism and Egyptian cinema.

In Chapter 11, Palesa Shongwe and Dylan Valley, in conversation with Pervaiz Khan, discuss their individual trajectories as scholar-film artists in the turbulent terrain of filmmaking in contemporary post-apartheid South Africa. In doing so, they explore the historical contours of African cinema and cinemas of

the African diaspora in the formation of their thinking about the moving image and their own filmmaking practices in a post-apartheid cultural eco-system. Shongwe and Valley also evaluate the cultural impact of South African television and the aesthetic shifts within television programming.

In particular, they explore the social and cultural meanings articulated in shows such as *Yizo Yizo* and *Soul City,* and the impact of *Yizo Yizo* on film aesthetics and cultural representation. Of equal significance are their reflections on the rise of new black independent voices in South African cinema and the contributions of those voices in shaping the nascent filmmaking community in the early 2000s. Among the filmmakers that Shongwe and Valley reference in their discussion are Teddy Mattera, Vincent Moloi, Palesa Letlaka and Zoliswa Sithole. While there is much historical reflection on their personal trajectories, Shongwe and Valley are also critically aware of the institutional barriers, funding challenges and the precarious nature of filmmaking in a neo-liberal South African environment.

We argue that it is not possible to recover a single, immutable African heritage. The search for singularity, essence and unvarnished heritage is a fraught affair, which is not to say that research and scholarship into the cultural achievements of pre-colonial Africa should not be pursued. To the contrary, there does exist strong and compelling scholarship in the field such as Cheikh Anta Diop's *Precolonial Black Africa* (1988), Constance B. Hilliard's *The Intellectual Traditions of Pre-Colonial Africa* (1997), and V. Tarikhu Farrar's *Pre-Colonial African Material Culture: Combatting Stereotypes of Technological Backwardness* (2020), among other texts. It is against this backdrop that Nwachukwu Frank Ukadike (1950–2018), the author of a series of seminal texts such as *Black African Cinema* (1994), *Questioning African Cinema: Conversations with African Filmmakers* (2002) and *Critical Approaches to African Cinema Discourses* (2014), among other publications, presented a Pan-Africanist vision of African cinema.

Reece Auguiste, like Bâ, endorses the idea of multiple paths into the future. Auguiste's Chapter 12 brings together some of the themes explored elsewhere in the book. Now when we ask the question posed by Ukadike in his 1994 book cited above, 'Whither African cinema?', we hear a robust and heartening response from Auguiste that has been presaged in the preceding chapters. Auguiste recalls Africa's encounters with modernity, gathering up multiple folds. He reminds us that it is no simple task to capture what are really the voluminous and variegated experiences of Africa with modernity. In a way, he suggests, we can measure the differential impacts and its particular receptions across Africa through the cinema it generated – or rather, as Auguiste points out, cinemas. Auguiste quotes John Akomfrah, urging us to talk 'in the plural, rather than about an African cinema as a kind of genre'.

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02

Cinema, Imperial Conquest, Modernity

Reece Auguiste, Cynthia Kros and Pervaiz Khan

While this chapter offers a deeper analysis of cinema's relationship to imperial conquest and its complicity in European constructions of Africa and related epistemologies on African subjectivity, it also seeks to explore its specific manifestation in South Africa. In addition, it strives to locate the African cinematic project within a geographical landmass known as Africa that is itself a construction, characterised by differentiations in historical, cultural and political experiences of colonialism and postcolonial governance.

Furthermore, it acknowledges the significant body of literature on African cinema and the immense scholarly contributions made to expanding our understanding of the field. However, the following analysis does not seek to present an encyclopaedic overview of all texts that have been published under the rubric African cinema. A venture of that scale is beyond the scope of this present work.

To the contrary, this chapter presents an evaluation of a few key selected texts pertaining to the African cinema corpus; it acknowledges the contributions that those texts have made to the field, but also seeks to underscore the conceptual and epistemological shortcomings that the texts inadvertently postulate. In an attempt to differentiate itself from prior texts on African cinema, this chapter suggests new ways of thinking about the category African cinema as a conceptual framework and epistemological field of knowing and doing. In so doing it situates itself as contributing to the existing scholarship. Meaning, it exists within a larger trajectory of literature on African cinema that strives to recalibrate our thinking about the *histories and practices of cinema in Africa*.

The central historical context with which this chapter is concerned is the interconnections between cinema, imperialism and modernity in Africa. In that sense, the chapter shares with other historical accounts, in different measure, a determination to unravel the configuration of this conceptual nexus and the epistemologies that it has produced since its arrival in Africa. By extension, it suggests that the volumes of literature on cinema in Africa are, in different ways, responding to more or less the same historical formations that have determined cinema's multiple trajectories in Africa. This, in part, accounts for the differentiation in historical analyses, methodological approaches, theories and conclusions arrived at in relation to the cinema's encounters with Africa and how the apparatus of the moving image has evolved into the present. One such point of contact occurred in South Africa in the twilight years of the nineteenth century.

Cinema first arrived in South Africa on 11 May 1896 at the magnificently named Empire Palace of Varieties, not far from the campus of the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) in Braamfontein, Johannesburg. Subsequently, it was in this ramshackle emerging metropolis that cinema, a product of modernity, began its long uneven path, south of the Sahara, of constructing Africans as colonial subjects while simultaneously utilising the cinematic apparatus to propagate Western discourses of racial and cultural difference. And so, in 1896 Johannesburg was the primal site, the proscenium space upon which this modernist mode of representation, identity construction, cultural interpretation, social inscription and spectacle was to unfold across the turbulent terrain of twentieth-century Africa.

Through cinema the European encounter with Africa found one of its most enduring articulations for projecting the unfolding of the colonial imaginary in all its material complexities. Of equal significance is the incontrovertible fact that cinema as a modality of visual representation in the colonial period was to become the dominant form through which Africans first glimpsed life lived within the expansive, rumbustious European imperial metropolis. In South Africa it was in Johannesburg that the city's colonial elites viewed films whose titles signify worlds that many may have encountered only in literary texts, historical tracts or casual conversations. The first films screened in Johannesburg on a theatrograph projector by magician Carl Hertz were *Street Scenes in London, Highland Dances, Military Parade, Trilby Dance* and *Soldiers' Courtship, On Westminster Bridge* and *Rough Sea at Dover*. Hertz bought the theatrograph after seeing inventor R.W. Paul screening films at the Alhambra Music Hall in Leicester Square, London, in early 1896. Paul was an engineer and inventor/pioneer of the early British film industry. His theatrograph rivalled the projection systems of the Lumiere brothers and Thomas Edison.

The screenings at the Empire Palace of Varieties, conducted a mere ten years after the birth of Johannesburg, seemed astonishing in that early cinema found one of its early outlets in this British colonial outpost. To that extent, the

history of cinema is inextricably linked to South Africa and Africa in general. And for that reason, Africa cannot be easily marginalised in historical accounts of the medium's journey.

Cinema's encounter with South African space offers an opportunity to re-examine a number of historically complex cultural movements. First, it rekindled the desire to rethink the nature of modernity and cinema in *relation* to Africa in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Second, it presented an opportunity to re-evaluate the terms upon which cinema had arrived on the continent and its initial reception, particularly among Africans. What was also astonishing about cinema's arrival in South Africa is that Johannesburg, a city built on gold mines that had only been established a decade before, had already shown signs of becoming an advanced colonial metropolis.

Gold mining built on extractive black labour resulted in some of the city's defining, enduring and contradictory features, including racial segregation and highly unequal concentrations of wealth and power. It is remarkable that Johannesburg, a British colonial outpost, drew on cinema in making itself in the image of a city rather than the ramshackle gold-mining camp which it had started out as so shortly before. Therefore, the nexus of gold, urbanisation and modernity constitutes an entry point for further historical and cultural investigation into cinema's role in not only Johannesburg's development but in its relationship to modernity.

The film shorts brought from England by sea, showing everyday scenes from London or the coast of Dover, also reminded us of how determined the city's wealthy *Uitlanders* (foreigners) were to maintain cultural ties tinged with nostalgia for Britain. What was seen as a brief camera shot of traffic crossing over a bridge in London, interesting only for its period character, or the tireless waves rolling in at Dover must have seemed a marvel of modern technology to its original audiences. But it is also probable that these scenes tugged at the hearts of the colonial settlers, confirming for them where 'home' really lay.

Perhaps the films also suggested a vivid contrast between the supposed civilised nature of British society and the 'backward' colonial outpost of the South African Republic. As this psychic split was deeply entrenched in the minds of the colonial settler class its presence functioned as a structuring trope with a weighty force of metaphysical uncertainty. Yet, paradoxically, this cognitive process contributed to the reinforcement of a racialised cultural economy and system of ontological superiority that constituted the material foundations of Johannesburg as an emerging colonial metropolis erected upon the extraction of gold.

Only a few months before the aforementioned film screenings, the Reform Committee, comprised of prominent Johannesburg citizens who had been frustrated by President Kruger's failure to protect their economic and political interests, had tried and failed to overthrow the Republic (the Transvaal) in the Jameson Raid of December 1895. This momentous rebellion was followed by

the South African War (1899–1902) – a mere three years after the screenings at the Empire Palace of Varieties. Incidentally, it would be one of the first wars to be portrayed through the medium of cinema – both documentaries and fictionalised representations – and relayed to audiences whose appetite had been whetted by earlier filmic representations of 'savage' South Africa.

There were two films shot specifically to articulate the final triumph of the colonial forces over 'the Zulu'[1] who had inflicted a humiliating defeat at the battle of Isandlwana on a portion of the British main column only 11 days after it had commenced its invasion of Zululand, leading to the so-called Anglo-Zulu War of 1879. The first film was a British Mutoscope titled *Landing of Savage South Africa at Southampton* (1899), supposedly depicting a troupe of 'Zulus' on the docks of Southampton performing war dances.

The second, *Savage South Africa–Savage Attack and Repulse* (1899), produced by Charles Urban's Warwick Trading Company, depicted, through historical re-enactment, the ultimate British victory over the 'Zulus'. Both shorts, infused with imperial tropes of the victorious British, served to reinforce the colonial precepts of British superiority while also providing entertainment and amusement for British audiences at home. Though this theme will be revisited later on in this text it should be noted that the wars depicted in these films were a premonition of the British scorched earth policy of 1900, which resulted in racially segregated concentration camps, malnutrition, disease and death. In the aftermath of the Peace Treaty of Vereeniging in 1902, which ended the South African War, the human cost was incalculable.

The devastating impact of concentration camps on the country's population reverberated for the next century – and beyond. The haunting memories of the black and white concentration camps continued their emotional impact into the next century. Certainly, among many of those who considered themselves descendants of the Boers, the memory of those camps helped to fuel Afrikaner nationalism further into the twentieth century with disastrous results.

It is important to recognise that the wars of conquest in the latter part of the nineteenth century, including the South African War and their aftermath, broadly constituted the historical context in which cinema arrived in South Africa. Wary of South African exceptionalism, the idea of *Reframing Africa* was to broaden the project's purview so as to accommodate the rest of the continent and the African diaspora in relation to the inseparable projects of modernity, cinema

1 The quotation marks around 'the Zulu' and 'Zulu' are to indicate, in the first place, that there are various complex debates about the nature of Zulu-speaking societies, not all of which were part of or considered themselves to be part of the Zulu kingdom. And see our discussion later in the chapter concerning problems around 'tribe' and 'tradition'. Also, current orthographic preference signalling a deference to the linguistic (and underlying) principles of African languages is to use 'amaZulu' to denote people, 'isiZulu' to denote the language and 'kwaZulu' to denote place.

and European imperialism. This expansion of the historical analysis serves to reinforce the idea that cinema's strategic location as a key determining factor in securing the ideological apparatus of imperial governance cannot be easily underestimated. As Sylvia Wynter has noted:

> No other medium was to be more effective than that of the cinema in ensuring the continued submission to its single memory of the peoples whom the West has subordinated in the course of its rise to world hegemony, no other medium is so potentially equipped to effect our common human emancipation from this memory, from therefore, in Nietzsche's terms, the prison walls of its world perception, or, in Marx's, from its ideology, or in mine, from the culture specific order of consciousness or mode of mind of which this memory is a centrally instituting function. (Wynter in Givanni 2000, 29)

As has already been indicated, the first films screened in Africa articulated a distinct regime of cultural representation. These representations predominantly pertained to European urban industrial and pastoral landscapes. While those indexical representations were the cinema's opening salvo on the continent, its singular most important function, in the colonial period, was its application in the construction of an African ontology along clearly defined imperial objectives, particularly, those pertaining to the regulation of the African body.

European objectives of structuring a new ontology for the newly colonised African subjects were commensurate with its nineteenth-century racialised discourses about Africa and Africans. In that sense, the so-called 'cinema of attractions' was complicit in the German, French, English and Dutch imperial expansion programmes in Africa in the wake of the Berlin Conference of 1884–1885. It was at that historic conference of European powers that the 'scramble for Africa' was initiated, which resulted in a competitive frenzy among European powers for control of African territory, commercial interest routes and resource extraction. Cinema's arrival in Africa was dovetailed in the unholy triad of scientific innovation, colonialism and capital accumulation.

More specifically, cinema's inscription in Africa represented the logical trajectory of an elaborate imperial visual episteme that had already found expression in European maps of Africa, colonial etchings, photography and the philosophical underpinnings of enlightenment discourses of power and racial difference. As such, the constituent ideological elements of European hegemonic ascension established the epistemic framework which was to shape the terms upon which Africa's encounter with cinema was to proceed in the years immediately after the invention of the medium in 1895.

It is impossible to extricate cinema's arrival in Africa from broader colonial and imperial incursions on the continent. Cinematic inscriptions upon the African

social body occurred within the parameters of the expansion of the Western world in which Africa was structurally and ideologically incorporated. As Sylvia Wynter states in her analysis of the role of cinema in the imperial project:

> For the new medium of cinema was itself to play a, if at that time still limited, role in the legitimation of the incorporation of Africa into the Western imperial system in post-slave trade terms. New, because this was not the first encounter of Africa and an expanding West. Some four and a half centuries before the birth of cinema, in the early decades of the fifteenth century, what was to become the Western world system had been first put in place in the wake of two voyages. These voyages were to transform the history of the Species. (Wynter in Givanni 2000, 28)

The two voyages referenced by Wynter were the Portuguese journey south of Cape Bojador (bulging Cape) which resulted in a landing on the coast of Senegal in 1444. The second expedition pertained to Christopher Columbus' departure from the shores of Castile in 1492 in search of the East Indies. Instead, he landed on a Caribbean island in the Bahamas that the indigenous population called Guanahani. Later he visited the islands now known as Cuba and Hispaniola in the same year, 1492.

To Wynter's point, the eventual inscription of cinema in Africa must be viewed as a logical consequence of the first and second voyages which were to set in motion the European colonisation project in Africa and its subsequent multifarious forms of colonial governance. Therefore, the inscription of the cinematic medium into African social and cultural formations was integral to global conjunctural shifts, which resulted in contested relations between Africa and European colonial powers. The specificity of that moment was characterised by the emergence of an ideological project in which the production of supposed African actualities was ostensibly for European audiences in the metropoles of Berlin, Paris and London. These films were designed to convey to audiences in Europe the materiality of life in Africa while implicitly projecting European hegemonic power onto the continent.

The production of these actualities (silent films) constituted the initial site for the reworking of racial tropes, colonial fantasies and new forms of ideological regulation of the African subject. These actualities were structured to narrativise Europe's sense of itself in contradistinction to African narratives of self and community. The significance of this ideological strategy in projecting and consolidating European power on the continent underpins the assessment offered by Glenn Reynolds:

> The African Actuality served ideological functions that, despite the existence of a few Egyptian investors before World War I, rarely allowed

> for the meaningful contribution of indigenous peoples. Many actualities lauded the military might of colonizing powers, while others turned African 'savages' into harmless performers and visual fodder for Western constructions of the Dark Continent. Two actualities reflecting the latter themes were given impetus by Earl Court exhibitions in London, which, by the mid-1890s, was a veritable propaganda machine for British Imperial prowess. (Reynolds 2015, 46)

In subsequent years, more specifically between 1898 and World War II, European cinematographers and colonial adventurers invariably produced film shorts and features that continued to perpetuate the ideological precepts of empire and imperial governance. According to Reynolds, this large body of colonial films can be broken down into several categories, such as newsreels, travelogues, actualities, scientific expedition, safari and wildlife expedition, and ethnographic films. This categorisation of films allowed for the construction of 'genres' loosely based around ideological themes pertaining to colonial representations.

Films such as *A Sneaky Boer* (1901), *Bushmen of the Kalahari* (1908), *Heart of Africa (a.k.a. Lady Mackenzie's Big Game Pictures*, 1915), *Wonders of the Congo* (1951), *Up the Nile to Central Africa* (1928), *Mill Hill Fathers Uganda Missionary Film* (1920), *Livingstone* (1925) and *Africa Joins the World* (1936) speak to the epistemological framework of empire and the ontological violence perpetrated upon colonial subjects. Today, these films exist as archival documents and epistemic evidence of the multiple ways in which Europe's colonial imaginary unfolded across Africa in the early twentieth century.

The preceding historical account is central to the ways in which film historiography in relation to Africa should be addressed because the colonial encounter and the epistemological foundation of empire are inextricably linked to the restructuring of African subjects. This is not to say that all Africans were complicit in the restructuring of their subjectivity or that they were all interpellated by the ideological precepts of empire building, as has already been pointed out in Chapter 1.

Evidently, there were many historical instances of cultural and political resistance, even rebellion; but an acknowledgement that the cinematic apparatus cannot be viewed in a vacuum is important in any discussion about cinema's historical location in Africa. Beyond the historical account of cinema's function within the apparatus of colonial governance, controlled as it was by European filmmakers, of equal magnitude are the operations of this apparatus in the hands of African filmmakers in the postcolonial period. The pioneers of African filmmaking have demonstrated how this medium can be utilised to address historical misrepresentations construed during the colonial period. Invariably they have done so through the prism of a radical and liberatory historical consciousness in which cinema is but one vehicle in the struggle over representation.

What might Africa mean?

The social, cultural, political and geographical impact of the 'scramble for Africa' reconfigured, transformed and reordered the institutional fabric of the continent into radically new spatial arrangements. These disruptive fissures, often accompanied by ontological and epistemological violence, transformed Africa and Africans into what the Congolese philosopher and cultural anthropologist Valentin-Yves Mudimbe has called European constructs (Mudimbe 1988, 1).

As such, what became the dominant systems of knowledge, historical discourses and visual representations pertaining to Africa were European constructs, secured by their epistemic parameters and disseminated through volumes of anthropological writings, missionary texts, discourses on eugenics, philosophical accounts and cinematic images. In totality, European historical and contemporary conceptions of Africa are in fact an invention of the European imaginary. Ultimately, European constructs reconstituted African space, short-circuited Africa's metaphysical trajectories, repressed its subterranean aspirations, secured the colonising structures and ensured that the question of African sovereignty would not be a realistic proposition until the mid-twentieth century.

If Africa is indeed a European invention then it is incumbent upon Africans on the continent and those in the African diaspora to inquire into the constitutive elements of this invention, critique its philosophical assumptions, dismantle its corrosive structures and propose new modes of existence and social relations that are commensurate with a more liberatory and inclusive ethos.

It is, therefore in the broader context of the hegemonic power of these European constructs that it is necessary to adopt a critical approach to what Maty Bâ in this volume calls getting 'to the bottom of the Euro-American invention of Africa', which he dates from 1896.

This approach is quite different from the way it has been characterised by Ukadike in *Black African Cinema* (1994) and, more recently, as the editor of *Critical Approaches to African Cinema Discourse* (2014). He sees African cultures as having been obliterated as a result of repeated and protracted colonial incursions. Given this sense of Africa's complete annihilation, it is hard to fathom the possibility of resurrecting what has been presented as more or less intact ancient aesthetic and narrative traditions.[2] It is an imaginary view of Africa that runs counter to the insistence of many scholars writing over the last few decades that, far from being inert, Africa has had a dynamic as well as a differentiated series of histories.

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2 Ukadike's view seems to have something in common with Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's famous *Decolonising the Mind* (1986, 16), in which the latter stressed the colonisers' reliance on 'cultural control' in order to effect their overall ambitions, determining how African people came to perceive themselves 'and their relationship to the world'.

In South Africa, scholars like those writing for a recent two-volume work edited by Carolyn Hamilton and Nessa Leibhammer (2016) have demonstrated that concepts often considered germane to Africa (notably tribe and tradition, implying timelessness and faceless anonymity), owe more to colonial predilections for bureaucratic simplification than they do to the ways in which pre-colonial African societies were organised. For anthropologists, missionaries and colonial officials working in Africa at the end of the nineteenth and in the first part of the twentieth centuries, it was useful to believe that Africans had always lived in and identified with different distinct tribes so that their locations could be mapped and their customs recorded, for the purposes, respectively, of satisfying scientific criteria, conversion to Christianity and, last but by no means least, for facilitating governance and control.[3]

Maty Bâ (see Chapter 4), in contrast with the impressions conveyed of an Africa that has basically remained unchanged over centuries and is theoretically recoverable, asks us to think about an Africa that has been and is constantly being produced. From the end of the nineteenth-century it was the moving image that made Africa seem so present and yet so strange – even repellent – to Western audiences thousands of kilometres away. Dutch scholar Jan Nederveen Pieterse (1992, 110) has noted that while the Tarzan films, for instance, may well be 'a forum in which ideas about culture and sexuality … can be worked out' they embody 'above all … a white-settler myth, a white power fantasy'. Yet, for half a century across much of the globe Tarzan narratives became one of the dominant tropes of the white-settler myth, the power of whiteness which stood in contradistinction to supposedly uncivilised natives.

This trope (as we mentioned in Chapter 1) became one of the popular entry points for cinematic images of the African continent. What this suggests is precisely the point being made by Bâ with echoes of Mudimbe – that Africa is an invention, a historical construction, a semiotic field whose source is the colonial imaginary. In that sense it is quite evident that the hegemonic idea which underpins perceptions of Africa is dialectical. It is produced and replicated through cinematic and literary strategies of othering and racial difference.

Currently, we are standing at what one of the contributors to this volume, Reece Auguiste, announces as a new historical conjuncture (see Chapter 12), meaning that a number of ideas and events have coalesced to produce something that is different from previous African formations – to reposition Africans in a new place and to reorientate their relationship to cinema and emerging moving-image practices. It may fill many with uncertainty but it also allows Africans to see new possibilities out of which can emerge new modalities

3 Anthropologists were sometimes employed by government to map the areas where different 'tribes' or sub-groups of 'tribes' lived for administrative purposes – see for well-known South African examples the cases of Van Warmelo (1935) and Breutz (1989).

of moving-image practice anchored in the nexus of multi-media arts and African aesthetics, broadly defined.

New approaches to cultural imperialism?

A positive cultural development is the turn in scholarship away from simply deploring the destructive impact of cultural imperialism. This, combined with the technological changes of the last two decades, has further democratised access to filmmaking and distribution platforms, which count radically against defeatism. There exists a fertile intersection between certain new trends in scholarship and mediamaking digital technologies that allows for greater autonomy and human agency in the field of cultural production.

Graeme Harper (2012), in his foreword to Maty Bâ and Will Higbee's edited collection, *De-Westernizing Film Studies*, summarises one of the core arguments of that book, namely that film cannot only be classified according to where it is made, but also by where it travels to and how. He gestures to how it is 'embraced, re-invented, made, watched, analysed, configured by a multiplicity of people for a multiplicity of purposes and with a multiplicity of results' (Harper 2012, xv). Africa, as we have hinted above, was present in the first five years after the medium's invention, even if one has to look hard for the real director of an early ethnographic film made in France or for the North African inspiration that led to significant innovation in the cinematic vision of the Lumières.

Therefore, the prosaic question of what Africa might mean – across the postcolonial regional spaces known as Francophone, Anglophone, Lusophone Africa, and including North Africa – is one that cannot be taken lightly. Although these postcolonial regional formations present new forms of political and cultural relations within Africa, they also raise new cultural pluralities, meaning it might be more productive to talk of 'African cinemas' (in the plural) rather than the conventional referent African cinema as singularity. As such, the analysis of cinema history and practices presented here is intended to contribute to constructing a transformed (or transforming) pedagogy, not only in film, but also in the arts more broadly as well as history, anthropology, literary studies and philosophy.

We envisage, and support some of the significant moves that have already been made in this direction – a curriculum that places Africa at the centre of cultural discourse, and a pedagogical model that allows students to engage critically with African authors, scholars and filmmakers both within Africa and in the African diaspora. For example, as Jihan El-Tahri suggests in her conversation with Pervaiz Khan (see Chapter 10), it is important to study the complete oeuvre of significant African filmmakers and, thus, their responses to colonialism and postcolonialism.

Review of selected existing scholarship

While acknowledging indebtedness to previous scholarship, this project is different from other endeavours in the field of film studies, specifically as it pertains to the African continent. We would like to now elaborate on what we mean. We see our work, as suggested above, in contrast to texts like those by Nwachukwu Frank Ukadike (1994). His contribution to the field of African film studies undoubtedly has enduring significance. At times, however, his analysis tends to veer toward an essentialist account of African culture, cinema and its future development.

The *Reframing Africa* project is predicated upon the idea that cinema in Africa is rooted in historically contextual processes, that it is indeed the outcome of the interconnectedness of historical, political and ideological forces, meaning that African cinemas are principally determined by the specificity of these configurations and that future developments of cinemas in Africa are contingent upon the dialectical processes which underpin these contexts. But the very affordance offered by any historical context is that it mitigates against the temptation of essentialism and of telling readers what to think. The penultimate aim of the *Reframing Africa* project is to anchor the work in what Maty Bâ has termed an ongoing pedagogic revolution – to make space for 'original theorising' in the service of critical pedagogy (Maty Bâ and Higbee 2012, 6).

In addition to Ukadike's, Bâ's and Higbee's contributions to the field, it is important to acknowledge the significant contributions made by other scholars in mapping out the tributaries of cinemas in Africa. Manthia Diawara's *African Cinema* (1992) remains a seminal text in African cinema studies, which has expanded our understanding of the discourses of production and representation in the African context. Diawara's analysis straddles the historical formation of African cinema and its contemporary manifestation on several interrelated levels: institutional, economic and geo-political. His text focuses on the institutional structures and economic framework which have historically underpinned film production practices in Africa since the colonial period. It simultaneously offers context for the uneven and quite often fragmentary approaches taken by African nation states towards the promotion of film production.

However, the suggested singularity implied in the term 'African cinema' also postulates an essentialism that works against analysis capable of addressing the plurality of African film practices and the multiple historical contexts in which they manifest. Because Diawara assumes a generalist approach in which the analysis revolves around the term 'African cinema', the analysis presented tends to produce an epistemological limitation, which forecloses the possibility of analyses driven by the contextual and historical *specificities* of cinema in Africa. In other words, the generalist arc inscribes in broad strokes the uneven development of film production across Africa, but what is really needed is analysis of the specificity of the cinema's local, regional and national contexts,

the differentiated institutional capacities across the continent and their complex relations with international film finance. This level of specificity would mitigate the attempt to arrive at an all-encompassing evaluation of cinema in Africa.

In light of what we have said above, it does mean that any transhistorical evaluation of cinema in Africa is inherently difficult to attain. Diawara presents an overwhelming focus on Francophone (Senegal, Guinea, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire) film production – presumably because of the hegemonic position that cinemas of the Francophone states have had in the continent. But, while the intentions are well placed, this approach constitutes its own epistemic limitations. The historical complexities of cinema in both the colonial and postcolonial eras, not to mention the specificity of the cinemas and its evolution within specific nation states, are marginalised in the attempt to construct a transnational historical account of cinema in Africa seen through an institutional and economic framework of regional production. Similarly, Diawara's *African Cinema: Politics and Culture* (1992) offers a generalised account of African film production, film distribution and exhibition (or the lack of it), and the promotional activities of the Pan African Film and Television Festival of Ougadougou (FESPACO) as the institutional epicentre of African cinema.

Although one can certainly appreciate the historical scope of Diawara's analysis, its broad strokes result in undercutting the specificity required to arrive at more historically nuanced in-depth evaluations of the cinema's long meandering journeys on the continent. In its attempt to address Sembène's realist cinema, Anglophone cinema, French contributions to Francophone production, Lusophone production, distribution, and textual analysis of specific films such as Souleymane Cisse's *Yeelen* (1987) and Mweze Nagangura's *La vie est Belle* (1987) (Life is Beautiful), the epistemological limitations of the broad-brushstrokes approach become quite evident.

In addition to Diawara's contributions, there are other significant texts that have sought to advance the terrain of African cinema scholarship and criticism. One such text is *Post-Colonial African Cinema: From Political Engagement to Postmodernism* by Kenneth W. Harrow (2007). In this text, Harrow makes the case for a 'new paradigm' in African film criticism that can move the discourse in more productive directions. His concern is that filmmaking practices in Africa are truncated by 'old formulas' that may have served the pioneers of African cinema well, but are no longer effective in the current moment. As a result, he seems to suggest that a more radicalised film criticism could push filmmaking practices into new terrain. Though there is much to appreciate in Harrow's proposition, such as the need for new forms of film criticism specific to African experiences of cinema, there are also several issues that remain problematic. Here we quote from Harrow's preface:

> It is time for a revolution in film criticism. A revolution against old formulas

> deployed in justification of filmmaking practices that have not substantially changed in forty years. Time for new voices, a new paradigm, a new view – a new Aristotle to invent the poetics we need for today. Something trashy, to begin, straight out of the Nigerian video handbook. Something sexy, without the trite poses of exotic behinds spinning the *ventilateur (lit. 'fan')* for the tourists. Something violent, without the obscenity of trivializing brutality, trivializing phallocentric abuse, without the accompanying violence of Truth holding the whiphand over thought and difference. Most of all, it is the retreat into safe and comfortable truisms that must be disrupted by this new criticism, this new third cinema challenge. (2007, xi)

Certainly, there is a need for African cinema scholarship to develop new paradigms of critical analysis, interpretation and evaluation that are contingent upon the specificity of African cinemas, cultural location and distinct histories, as we have implied above. Nonetheless, there are problems implicit in the approach that Harrow proposes. His call for a new African film criticism is predicated upon the notion that some salient historical truths should be abandoned (he refers to 'truisms', suggesting well-worn clichés). But one singularly important truth (as opposed to a 'truism') is that from its inception, African cinemas as distinct projects of modernity on the continent have had to, out of necessity, respond to the racialised representational and symbolic discourses of colonial histories, and later Hollywood's complicity in the construction and dissemination of racial stereotypes about Africa and its subjects.

Most importantly, it appears that in Harrow's rush for a paradigm shift he overlooked the significance of cinematic representations produced by Ousemane Sembène, Safi Faye and Med Hondo, among others, as cultural antidotes to the corrosive cultural impact that Europe has had on African identities. Regardless of one's view of the corpus of films produced by Africans since Sembène's *Borom Sarret* (1964), it is imperative that we do not ignore the historical fact that African films have spoken and continue to speak directly to the colonial and postcolonial experiences of Africans in ways that European cinema pertaining to Africa has not. And, while Harrow is prepared to jettison, for example, Third Cinema theory, we recognise how historically relevant its methodological and ideological tenets were in the formation of African cinematic voices. Also, it is not clear as to why the 'old formulas' are now irrelevant to the ongoing struggles for African cinematic representation or what precisely the old formulas are.

Harrow's marginalisation of Third Cinema might be acceptable in some quarters, but it is important that the historical, cultural and political achievements of Third Cinema be acknowledged as well as the reasons for its emergence. Third Cinema emerged out of the socio-political situation in Latin America in the 1960s. It was a rallying call for a cinematic approach rooted in the historical

experiences of the region. As such, Third Cinema sought to develop filmmaking practices and an aesthetic commensurate to the aspirations and overall objectives of liberating Latin America from foreign domination – in this case, the United States and its policy of dumping Hollywood films on Latin American markets. Launched by the Spanish-born Octavio Getino and the Argentinian Fernando Solanas, Third Cinema offered filmmakers a manifesto and new grammar for a filmmaking that spoke directly to their colonial and postcolonial experiences in Latin America.

It was this movement that inspired several texts that are now considered classics in film studies, such as Glauber Rocha's *The Aesthetics of Hunger* (1965), Octavio Getino and Fernando Solanas's 'Toward a Third Cinema' (1969), and the Ethiopian scholar Teshome Gabriel's classic text *Third Cinema in the Third World: The Aesthetics of Liberation* (1982). Beyond these documents, several films were made under the Third Cinema rubric, including *The Hour of the Furnaces* (1968) directed by Getino and Solanas, and *Memories of Underdevelopment* (1968) by Tomas Gutierrez Alea. It is disingenuous to dismiss this historically significant and transformative body of work, its cultural significance and the voices of those who found in its precepts a path towards a more liberatory cinema aesthetics.

What is needed are research and scholarship that first recognises the contributions made by Third Cinema theorists and practitioners, how these practices may have influenced African filmmakers and even the shortcomings of Third Cinema as a body of film practices. More importantly, it is imperative that Africa ascertains a space to develop its own body of critical theories about the moving image grounded in African phenomenology, epistemology, history, aesthetics and symbolic philosophy.

In that context, German philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer's pronouncement is worth noting because it speaks directly to the inherent epistemological problem Harrow's 'new paradigm' of African film criticism postulates:

> We still do not really know anything about what our civilization with its skyscrapers and powerful machines means for human beings living in other parts of the world. Who knows, perhaps we will come to see that the relaxed conversation of a Chinese [or Arab, or African, or Indian, etc.] wise person with his disciples also has something to contribute, something that is quite different from the logic and desire for proof we first learned from the Greeks and which we have developed into an instrument to dominate the world and thereby perhaps have also disfigured [*denaturiett*] it. (Gadamer 2001, 100)

Harrow's *Trash: African Cinema from Below* (2013) stands as a kind of postscript to the earlier *Post-Colonial African Cinema: From Political Engagement*

to *Postmodernism*. Here Harrow re-engages with his earlier opposition to film criticism and theory anchored in national liberation agendas and the politically engaged precepts of Third Cinema, which he views as an albatross that has constrained the development of African cinema in new directions.

Instead, Harrow focuses on trash, garbage, human debris as a space in which art and politics can intersect. In an attempt to establish a new way of thinking about African cinema, the twelve chapters deploy the trope/signifiers of trash as the place in which to position this new criticism. Harrow's turn to trash, human squalor, waste and the abject as the object of critical scholarship is predicated upon the assumption that these signifiers have received treatment in African cinematic representations, but have not been the subject of critical inquiry. In the quest to elevate trash as object and subject of representation, Harrow looks to the burgeoning Nollywood film industry in its ability to narrativise trash, garbage and the abject. Harrow postulates that:

> Nollywood is not the answer to trash: it is the answer to African culture's quest for a viable economic basis that rests upon an African audience and its taste. *Trash: African Cinema from Below* attempts to establish a critical basis for reading African cinema beyond the narrow ideological and dogmatic base on which it originally depended. (Harrow 2007, 6)

There are several problems with the framing of this proposition, the first of which is the idea that Nollywood presents an alternative to the model represented by Sembène, Cisse, Sissoko, Flora Gomes, Mambéty or the newly emerging Mati Diop of Senegal. In other words, the model of filmmaking practices that has come to define what an African cinema(s) could look like in terms of narrative forms, aesthetics and representation. Secondly, it assumes that an 'African audience and its taste' is a homogeneous and unitary known quantity as opposed to a community characterised by a diverse and fragmentary space of taste cultures. While there are certainly legitimate reasons to bring critical readings and interpretations to Nollywood films, that in and of itself does not necessarily have to supersede the cinemas of Sissoko, Cisse, etc. Neither does Nollywood have to be placed in opposition to the cinematic practices that have come to define what may constitute the space of African moving image practices.

In proposing a new paradigm/film criticism grounded in trash, Harrow focusses on the Nollywood corpus as having the ability to subvert (in its rendering of trash through the diegetic frame) consumerist neo-liberal economic and social desires. It is highly debatable that Nollywood stands as a critical counterpoint to the neo-liberal ethos or that trash has the ability to exude disruptive and destabilising narratives in African cultural economies. The fact remains, Nollywood is itself a socio-cultural product of the logistical operations of neo-liberalism in Nigeria and its tendency to reproduce such tropes is overlooked. Harrow also fails to

recognise that the human detritus, the abject, and the constitutive framework of trash are themselves produced through the materiality of neo-liberal economic and cultural agendas, not only in Nigeria but across the continent – agendas that are now key determinants in the acceleration of economic disparities, cultural disfigurement and the increased dehumanisation of African subjects.

Nollywood is simply a manifestation of the extent to which cinema is integral to the global entertainment system; therefore, it is not surprising that Nollywood has been termed the new African black gold, which has attracted African and non-African investors – French media giant CanalPlus is an investor in the distribution of Nollywood films. These emerging developments speak to the process of vertical and horizontal integration of transnational media corporations across the global economy. For these reasons, trash as conceptualised by Harrow does not carry the supposed power to constitute a new liberative African cinema aesthetics because the 'trash' that is spoken of is indeed produced through postcolonial despair, another form of African suffering that is increasingly commodified and fetishised in the circuits of global capital.

As indicated earlier in this chapter, the task of accounting for every text on African cinema is outside the scope of this current work; however, we also recognise the tremendous efforts of other scholars who have grappled in multiple ways with the complexities of the moving image in the African context. To that end we would like to mention Sada Niang's *Nationalist African Cinema: Legacy and Transformation* (2014); David Murphy and Patrick Williams's *Postcolonial African Cinema: Ten Directors* (2007); Valerie K. Orlando's *New African Cinema* (2017); Oliver Bartlet's *African Cinemas: Decolonizing the Gaze* (2001); K. Martial Frindethie's *Francophone African Cinema: History, Culture, Politics and Theory* (2009); Mette Hjort and Eva Jorholt's *African Cinema and Human Rights* (2019); *Symbolic Narratives/African Cinema: Audiences, Theory and the Moving Image* edited by June Givanni (2000); and Josef Gugler's *African Film: Re-Imagining a Continent* (2004), to name a few.

With the exception of K. Martial Frindethie's *Francophone African Cinema: History, Culture, Politics and Theory*, which addresses the regional specificity of Francophone cinema, the multifarious approaches taken in all the aforementioned texts tend to perceive African cinema as a transcontinental phenomenon. They are meta-narratives pertaining to the constitutive framework of African cinema as a singular construct. One could argue there is nothing inherently problematic with these transcontinental approaches, since such approaches exist in European and Asian cinema scholarship and therefore constitute an established analytical arrangement within cinema scholarship in general. Indeed, one could also contend that these are certainly useful texts for those who are unfamiliar with the contributions of Africa to the cinematic medium. However, for reasons we have argued above, it would be preferable if the parameters of analysis into the specificity of cinema within nation states were given more analytical latitude.

This would allow for a system of historical, cultural and aesthetic differentiation, which in turn opens epistemic spaces for the analysis of the specificity of cinema histories, institutional formations, audience reception practices and filmmaking practices within the borders of African nation states. This conceptual framework allows for the kind of analysis one sees in Litheko Modisane's *South Africa's Renegade Reels: The Making and Public Lives of Black-Centred Films* (2012). Modisane's text examines the critical intersection of capitalism, imperialism and modernity with reference to black-centred films made in South Africa. His analytical treatment of films such as *Come Back Africa* (1959), *uDeliwe* (1975), *Mapantsula* (1988), *Fools* (1998) and the television drama *Yizo Yizo* (1999, 2001) orientates our attention to the cultural location of these films in the South African public sphere. In particular, Modisane examines the ways in which these films narrativise the black social experience in the apartheid era and the public's critical engagements with these forms of representation.

Modisane's critical inquiry traces the 'public lives' (Modisane 2012, 20) of these four films and the television series *Yizo Yizo* because he is interested in how particular films and the circumstances under which they were screened or broadcast enabled the creation of public spheres in which blackness could be reflected on in relatively autonomous ways. As indicated earlier, not only does Modisane's book critically evaluate *Yizo Yizo*'s cultural location in the public sphere, but more importantly he examines its structural relation to the film industry's 'racialized structures of monopoly capitalism' (Modisane (2012, 3).

It is important to make mention of one more text produced and published in South Africa, namely, Jyoti Mistry, Antje Schumann et al.'s edited collection *Gaze Regimes: Film and Feminisms in Africa* (2005). As we were putting together one of the drafts of this chapter, the appallingly high incidence of gender-based violence in South Africa was brought vividly to the public's attention through yet another horrific case of rape and murder, this time committed in a suburban post office. The victim was 19-year-old Uyinene Mrwtyana, a student in Film and Media Studies at the University of Cape Town.

Mistry et al.'s book explores the overwhelming constraints and obstacles faced by women and sexual minorities in becoming filmmakers, as well as cinematic representations of gender and sexuality. The chapter by scholar and filmmaker Nobunye Levin is extremely astute and constitutes an original critique of the way in which the image of Sara Baartman, the Khoi woman who was exhibited as a freak in Europe during her lifetime and then posthumously in the musée de l'homme in Paris, continues to be abused through the way it is deployed in the post-apartheid national narrative.

Mistry, Schumann and colleagues conceive of their book as a collection of 'texts' and 'conversations'. They call the methodological style an approach of 'bricolage' (2015, xiii). Their text is deliberately non-linear and intended to offer multiple perspectives. While the principles behind this approach should

be endorsed, it seems that to make sense of them the reader must have considerable prior knowledge of the field. Furthermore, Chapter 2, which is structured in the form of an interview with Sudanese filmmaker Taghreed Elsanhouri and German filmmaker and feminist academic Christina von Braun deliberating over the meaning of feminism in the European context and whether or not a European-inflected feminism is applicable in Africa, in essence sets the tone for the whole book.

Gender itself often seems to be defined in terms of European feminist history and theory. Since all the principal concepts are presented as emanating from societies with long histories of written literature, sub-Saharan Africa (and here we use the term cautiously because we want, as we will explain later on, to cross the division between sub-Saharan Africa and North Africa) cannot but appear as a latecomer to the table of social and cultural discourse. It is the feminist writings of the likes of Susan Sontag, Judith Butler, Julia Kristeva and E. Ann Kaplan among others that prove to be the principal theoretical sources.

The overreliance on European feminist theory to address the specificities of gender in Africa unintentionally opens up epistemological and ontological problems in feminism and cinematic representation in Africa that it is incapable of resolving. It should be noted that there exists an impressive body of scholarship pertaining to gender constructions in Africa or conceptual frameworks that have been developed to specifically address pre-colonial, colonial and postcolonial women's experiences of gender relations. Among this body of work are the writings of Chandra Talpade Mohanty, *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonising Theory, Practicing Solidarity* (2003); Ifi Amadiume, *Re-Inventing Africa: Matriarchy, Religion and Culture* (1997); Ifi Amadiume, *Male Daughters, Female Husbands: Gender and Sex in an African Society* (2015); Anirban Das, *Towards a Politics of the (Im)possible: The Body in Third World Feminism* (2010); Jacqui M. Alexander and Chandra Mohanty, *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures* (1996); and Oyéwùmí Oyèrónke, *The Invention of Women: Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourses* (1997).

The challenge, then, is to bring African feminist cinematic representations into dialogue with the epistemological and ontological breakthroughs that these texts represent. More specifically, any analysis of the relationship between feminism and film in Africa must strive to establish its epistemological grounding in the sociological and philosophical precepts in texts that have challenged, critiqued and delegitimised the supposed universality of Western constructions of gender and identity formation.

Conclusion

While the cinematic apparatus is a modernist invention, which has been utilised in various constructions of cultural representation, it is also evident that not all

representations are equal. The European invention of Africa, its philosophical constructs, its array of epistemes found a willing handmaiden in the cinema. Not only has the cinema contributed to the structuring of the discourses of this invention but it propagated white-settler myths and other constructions that have been detrimental to Africa.

When the triad cinema, Africa and modernity is invoked in discourse, it is to begin the process of disentangling a set of epistemic relations that have come to constitute historical meanings about Africa. The disentanglement of these inextricable relations requires a herculean task on multiple fronts. From philosophy to photography, from literary discourse to performance art and from historical scholarship to moving-image practice, this triad presents itself as a crucible to scholars and artists.

And yet cinema, Africa and modernity constitute the proscenium upon which Africans must continue to engage with the power of this triad in the postcolonial moment. It is through the practices of sonic art, photography, the moving image and historical scholarship, that the work of delineating the relations and processes of this epistemic triad must proceed. A significant part of this delineation has to do with the colonial and postcolonial archives and in particular those pertaining to the moving image.

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03

Reflections on Ciné-archival Studies and the Dispositif in Africa

Aboubakar Sanogo

These are for those to whom history has not been friendly...
For those who have known the cruelties of political becoming...
Those who demand in the shadows of dying technologies
Those who live with the sorrows of defiance
Those who live among the abandoned aspirations which were the metropolis.
Let them bear witness to the ideals which in time will be born(e) in hope
In time, let them bear witness to the process by which the living transform the dead into partners in struggle...
(Black Audio Film Collective, 1986, *Handsworth Songs*)

This essay argues that the time for a comprehensive approach to the problem of the archival in Africa, with the cinema and moving image as a point of entry, has come and proposes a vision toward the emergence of a ciné-archival studies and *dispositif* to address this urgent need. It starts from the realisation of the difficult state of moving-image archiving across the continent, characterised by a series of limitations which are symptomatic of a series of lacks and absences, which include archival consciousness (absence of concerted efforts to positively and systematically address the crying question of the preservation and transmission of cinematic heritage to current and future generations through schooling, and through societal and cultural institutions at large), infrastructural, institutional, economic, political and policy challenges. Indeed, briefly stated, such challenges include the absence of policies of cinematic heritage, both in

individual countries and across the continent, including its absence in schools, from elementary to tertiary education, and indeed in film schools themselves, and in the larger society and culture.

These absences are often augmented in times of difficult political transition by the active destruction of adversarial archival material. These attitudes are often superimposed on profound institutional limitations (many countries lack institutions for the preservation and safeguarding of their, the continental and indeed the world's film heritage). This is often characterised by a state of generalised financial scarcity involving an absence of designated budgets to tend to the past of the moving image. Of utmost concern are the infrastructural and technical challenges characterised by an absence of adequate buildings to properly store the moving-image heritage, leading to a poor state of preservation and advanced deterioration of prints, tapes and other archiving formats, to which must be added poor security, involving the absence of fireproofing, of environmental control, of state-of-the-art labs for basic repairs and indeed for digitisation and restoration, along with the reign of obsolescent equipment and insufficient and often not up-to-date training, staffing and human resources.

This is compounded by the work of nature and acts of God, including inclement weather conditions ranging from floods and earthquakes to scorching heat. Under these conditions, curation and access, and indeed the nurturing of a local, national and continental film culture, become perilous even as they are set in a context of profound transformations of the media landscape with (until recent counter-measures) the slow vanishing of film-theatrical culture. This has been accelerated by the closing of movie theatres among other things, even as new opportunities of spectatorial address have emerged with the ubiquity and portability of the digital.

These difficulties must be understood against the formidable stakes and potential of a continent-wide ciné-archival project involving pedagogics, awareness-raising and lobbying efforts to create an enabling ecology for such an endeavour that could act as fuel for building, through the moving image, the Pan-African project/subject as well as offer itself potentially as a model for what might be done when the ciné-archival is taken seriously.

It is important to remember that the cinema is, and has been, one of the best ways through which Africa has presented itself to the world, entered into conversation with itself and with the world, has displayed its beauty, celebrated as well as critiqued its cultures, its ways of being, and partaken in structuring the world according to its own ideas. The cinema has thus rejoined various other means through which the continent has sought to reclaim its pride of place and dignity in the world, and to participate in bending it to its will. This general effort, however, is under threat through the lack of a systematic way of addressing and attending to the continent's cinematic heritage, itself part and parcel of the world's visual documentary heritage, chronicling the travails and triumphs of

what it means to live and die in the world as humans, and more specifically, as Africans. This happens paradoxically at a moment when there is an explosion of activity in the field of cinematic/moving-image production and consumption across Africa. There is arguably little put in place to ensure that what is currently being produced or was produced in the past will be available for current and future generations of Africans and others across the world interested in the image of Africa as captured by the cinematic apparatus. Indeed, one of the features of the cinema on this continent is its self-assumed and self-appointed function as a/ the critical conscience of the continent. This is how many of its cinematic pioneers redefined it, not solely as entertainment, but, more importantly, as vehicles for its critical transformation. What might be done to ensure the transmission of such and numerous other functions of the cinematic heritage to generations to come? This is one of the many concerns of this essay.

A speculative flashback

Let us start with a speculative flashback. If the gods of Ancient Egypt[1] were to look at our planet Earth today, indeed at our continent, would they not be puzzled at the situation of moving-image archiving in Africa and potentially elsewhere? What would Seshat, the goddess of archiving, the Keeper of Records, The One Who Writes, the goddess not only of wisdom and knowledge, but also specifically of astronomy, mathematics, architecture, building, surveying and astrology, think about the above-mentioned state of archiving in Africa today? Would she, who was represented as 'holding a palm rib upon which years are stretched … and a tadpole with the number 100 000 … and who was seated upon the "shen of eternity"'(Wilkinson 2003, 167) even understand the overall desolate place and status of the ciné-archival in Africa today or of the place of Africa in the conversations about the archival, the continent that begot humans and humanised them through culture, the arts and the sciences? What would her husband, Thoth, who was the god of the arts, letters and sciences, that is, the god of scribes and scholars, who was associated with truth and integrity and was tasked with recording both long reigns and the afterlife (Wilkinson 2003), ruminate in full knowledge of the very *longue durée* of this continent that is at once the archive of the world and of the human? What would both jackal-headed Anubis, god of death, funerals and mummification, known as 'He who is in the place of embalming' (Wilkinson 2003, 188), and scarab beetle-headed Khepri/Khepri-Ra/Kheper-Ra/, god of time, movement and becoming, but also of resurrection, in other words, the gods of the moving image, think of

1 I wish to thank philosopher and Egyptologist, Dr Yoporeka Somet, for enlightening exchanges on the gods of Ancient Egypt.

our negligence, lack of ambition, acumen and imagination as we think of film conservation, for instance, in terms of mere decades and potentially centuries, while, in Ancient Egypt, the units of measure were millennia, and indeed eternity itself? What would they make of our difficulties with preserving, caring for, and tending to the very technologies, apparatuses and instruments that helped us mummify and embalm time and generate movement in order to serve as records of our times, our lives, our ways of being and doing? What, they might ask, have we done with their heritage in light of our current thinking, practices and institutions of the ciné-archival?

This essay is concerned with the archival, indeed the ciné-archival, as a problem in and for the African continent and seeks to ground a multipronged vision of a radically overdetermined concept in its multiple understandings and potential applications and implications, where the question of the archival is taken more seriously than it is at the moment. It will first anchor a ciné-archival desire in select and relevant theoretical discourses. Second, it will seek to lay out a vision for the emergence of the ciné-archival studies and *dispositif*[2] (apparatus) that would take charge of the various discursive, institutional, infrastructural, pedagogic, archiveological,[3] and identitarian implications of the archival on and for the African continent and beyond.

Theorising ciné-archival desire

The archival as a discursive formation has been the object of interest and subject of meditation and discussion in a multiplicity of fields in the past decades. Indeed, there has been a proliferation of discourses on the notion of the archival from various fields, which speaks to the ways in which the concept interpellates a plurality of often contradictory constituencies and interests. This is testimony to the dynamic nature of the concept, which has been opened up to numerous understandings and thus also made possible the entry of the multitudes into the conversation around the archival and helped jettison it from its quasi-monopoly status in the hands of both archivists and historians.

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2 My use of the term 'dispositif' here is broader than that of Giovanna Fossati (2009) in her book *From Grain to Pixel: The Archival Life of Film in Transition*. Fossati's use is primarily inspired by film theorist Jean Louis Baudry and focuses more, in the archival context, on collection management through the delivery mechanisms of archival films to audiences. In her section 'Film as Dispositif', she emphasises the relationship between film projection and the viewer as an enabling condition for experiencing a *dispositif*. My approach, inspired and founded on a more philosophical ground as articulated by Michel Foucault, is related although irreducible to the cinema, encompasses technological means of delivery but exceeds them.

3 I borrow this term from my colleague Catherine Russell from Concordia University, who also borrowed it from Joseph Katz, who coined it in 1991. Russell broadly deployed the term for a much consecrated multi-modal practice of reusing and repurposing of archival footage in films in her 2018 book *Archiveology: Walter Benjamin and Archival Film Practices*.

It is impossible to address the specificities of the ciné-archival without first delving into aspects of the archive of discourses on the archival in general. It is, however, not the project of this essay to cover all the various conceptions of the archival. Instead, it will simply highlight aspects of the archival that is considered most compelling and generative for ciné-archival studies and the *dispositif* project.

First a distinction in the use of terminology between the 'archive' and the 'archival'. The archival may be considered more expansive than the archive. The archival may be said to denote the notion of that which pertains to the archive, which means not solely the buildings, custodianship, curatorship and preservation, that is, the professional domain of the archive as traditionally understood, but also the discourses that have developed around it from fields as diverse as philosophy, cultural studies, media studies, history, archival studies, etc. The archival involves at once discourses, statements, practices, professions, institutions and infrastructure, and the relationships between them.

This leads us to Michel Foucault's (1969) recasting of the archive, an important point of departure. Foucault's concern is not with the archive as institution or profession per se, but with the meta-archival, that is, with that which creates the conditions of existence of the archive in the first place. Indeed, for him, the meaning of the archival is not to be found solely with archivists. They partake in shaping and framing the term, but it is irreducible to them. The archival is thus a discursive field that is shaped by archivists, by technologies on the archive, by historians, by the users of the archive, among many others. The archival is the product of a series of statements made about particular relationships between the past and the present, the continuing nature of the hold of the past on the present, but also the dynamisms and positivity of the present and its ability to always interrogate our relationship to the past.

It may be argued that not all cultures have the same understanding and perspective on the relationship between the present and the past and its transmission. In that regard, from an archaeological standpoint, were we to thoroughly disambiguate the term, it might be argued that there may be as many perspectives on the archival as there are cultures. Indeed, given that not all cultures have the same protocols and approaches to the question, the field of the archival should in principle be one of the most fertile grounds for theoretical innovation. For instance, the arguably depersonalised/instrumental/technologised relationship to the archive in some cultures may differ from its configuration in other cultures more invested in embodiment and 'engodment' or 'theomorphisation' as particular ways in which one may approach the archive.

Different approaches to the archival may be articulated around a potential spectrum from instrumentalisation to some which figure the centrality of the subject as receptacle of the archival. In other words, the archival as an object of knowledge is conceptually overdetermined, and the relationships that exist

between different objects that constitute it are far from transparent and self-evident and can and must be unmoored from each other to allow for the production of other types of understandings. This constitutive 'incoherence' of the archival implies, for Africa, that one should not simply accept that one is arriving late at the game of the archival but rather, one should re-inscribe and reactivate the fundamental incoherence of the game itself, and recognise its status simply as a conjunctural compromise, as conventional rather than transcendental fiat.

With this in mind, it is possible to claim different knowledge formations as also and equally partaking of the archival, regardless of their origin (whether African, Mayan, Chinese, etc.). In other words, the archival allows us to liberate the term 'archive' from its hegemonic Euro-American understanding and open it up to all other forms and cultural practices that may partake in the archival without adopting the European form of the archive. It could be argued that there is thus by definition no un-archival society or culture. One simply has to study the specific modes of configuration of knowledge of said culture to unearth its archive, the archive of its archive.

This helps us connect to our earlier reference to Ancient Egypt, which may be understood as something akin to a primal scene of the archival. Indeed, the reference to Ancient Egyptian gods as a point of departure for our conversation around the problems and potentially the horizon of the ciné-archival in Africa makes it possible to underscore the notion that in Africa, the archive was never 'a foreign country' (Cook 2011),[4] as our contemporary attitudes regarding the archival may lead many to believe. Indeed, the expanse of the attributes of the aforementioned deities (Seshat, Thoth, Anubis, Kheper-Ra) speaks to a very dense and complex lexicon through which an ancient African culture sought to think and imagine what we now refer to as the archival, and foreground the multiple overdeterminations of that very notion which contemporary scholarship on the archive posits as partaking at once of the hard sciences, the arts and the humanities more generally. Indeed, in the vision of the Ancient Egyptians, such hard separation did not exist between the disciplines since the gods into which they were theomorphised had attributes of each.

Thus, Seshat and Thoth engodded (so to speak) both, while Anubis and Khepri engodded more of the metaphysical realms. The archival, therefore, was never solely a matter of buildings which hold records with their archons, but it encompassed many aspects of a society's entire way of life. Another important impetus for our archival desire is the notion of the archival as a technology (not necessarily and solely mechanical, industrial, cybernetic or digital) for accessing the past. Indeed, the archive is one of the most formidable means through which

4 This quote is adapted from Terry Cook's (2011) text 'The Archive(s) is a Foreign Country'.

humans have sought to make sense of and govern their relationship to time, to the past. Humans do live in a paradoxical situation in that they cannot directly access the past.

Yet, they are well aware that the past shapes their time/their present in an often indelible, authoritarian and sometimes inescapable manner. To continue with our 'morphing' metaphors, if the past were a being (and it is to some extent from an experiential standpoint), it would be a formidably elusive one for being always despotically present yet furtive and difficult to grasp. It would be a curious being, a master of the riddle, concealing the fullness of its being, yet like an illusionist, leaving clues along the way, which we have come to refer to as 'traces' and which we materially keep in what we have termed in one of our understandings of the archive. If it were a being, the past would be akin to that without which we could not be, that which embodies the millions of years of life and death on this Earth, of the cultures created, the technologies invented, the diseases cured and spread.

How to keep track of all these? How to know about those who preceded us? How to try to understand them? How to reveal the logics behind their ways of being, their modes of seeing? We only have clues, traces, both material and immaterial, tangible and intangible, spiritual and physical, which are often seen to condense multiple sheets of time, which are also multiple ways in which the past seeks to interpellate us, to beckon and hail us, to make us aware of its eternal presence, to make us aware of all the promises that all of human history has ever made and that still lie dormant in this formidably invisible and inescapable being that so profoundly shaped the destinies of our forefathers and mothers, and is equally shaping ours, that marks our identities, makes us both similar and different from our fellow beings. It is one of the reasons for the fascination with the past, with the traces it leaves, with memory and the archive.

It is in light of the vast complexities of the past itself, of its (in)accessibility and its elusiveness and its dispersal into so many different forms throughout every single cultural form, that the archive is also coveted by all cultures, all formations inside a given culture, for possessing that being in some ways means accessing some form of Grail. That is why it is sometimes guarded in a building, looked over by 'archons' (Derrida 2008, 13), surveilled by the state (Mbembe 2002) because through it, it is possible to make (and unmake) any and all statements about the world (Foucault 1969). It need not take the form of papers and documents or moving images for that matter. It may be lodged in our memory, our unconscious. It may be found in our languages, our various cultural forms, our artistic and creative practices, our trades and skills, our narratives (oral, written, silent, silenced or unspoken) and cosmogonies. It may be sensual and found in things related to our senses of smell, and sight, and sound, taste, and touch, and all our creative and inventive endeavours that emerge from said senses.

Our archival desire is also fuelled by the notion of the archival as a mode of engaging various modalities of memory, not only memory as a factory where identities get manufactured, but also memory as traumatic trace of catastrophe which befell the human, and the archival as 'memory of the future' (Jedlowski 2016; Leccardi 2016 Tota and Hagen 2016). Indeed, to this triple imperative of memory, we have profound obligations and responsibilities that underscore our work on the archival.[5]

If, like the archival, memory studies is a field between the humanities, the social sciences and the hard sciences (Tota and Hagen 2016, 2), the multiplicity of categories it has generated becomes indispensable for any work around the archive, and makes it part of the archival as previously defined, that is, as the overall ecology of the archive. This essay will focus on one of the most compelling notions, that is, the archival as memory of the future. Indeed, according to Paolo Jedlowski, 'memories of the future are recollections of what individuals and groups expected in the past' (Jedlowski 2016, 128). He adds that 'what these recollections teach is that the future has never been imagined in a single way. But, showing that the past is a reservoir of possibilities, they suggest that the same is also true for the present' (Jedlowski 2016, 128).

The notion of memory of the future makes possible the re-visitation and re-foregrounding of some of the unfulfilled expectations of the past, for the past is the site not only of hopes that were not realised, but also of ambitions and visions that were articulated. It makes it possible for us to historicise our present through past visions of emancipation. It allows us to take stock of the gaps between the said visions and our contemporary reality, to actually analyse our present with (h)in(d)sight and critical distance in order to comprehend the factors which contributed to potential failures and make it possible to re-enchant and re-energise the present with the hibernating energies of yesteryears. The past, in other words, is not solely made of time but also of latent energy, in abeyance, re-purposable and reactivable energy that could endow an apparently inert present (or a present rendered inert) with the wings of the possible.

There is a certain debt toward these unfulfilled energies of the past, to reconnect/re-plug them to the present and make the present more subversive and dissident than it currently is. This is part of the allure (Farge 2013) of the ciné-archival, its pregnancy with energies of hoped-for past futures that may be reactivated to revise contemporary terms of debates. In that sense, the notion of memory of the future partakes in the fundamentally critical ontology of the archival, one which is always already a bearer of dissent, of subversion, of alternative approaches, and thus has a transformational potential to the extent

5 It is not within the purview of this essay to delve into the details of memory studies. The essay will simply single out elements within it that are deemed indispensable to the project at this point in time.

that, viewed through the lens of the archival future-past, the present may be seen as accidental and tangential. The archival may thus be seen as always already a potential danger for the present, or for those who have framed the present in hegemonically unequal terms. It carries the promise of undoing the myths of an amnesiac present. In other words, what is being recovered in the archival is also a set of visions, hopes and aspirations to nurture us in our present and make us confident in our ability to genuinely and thoroughly shape the future.

On the need for a ciné-archival studies and *dispositif*

There has seldom been a time where there was a need for the coming together of an idea and a place, the ciné-archival and Africa. This dynamic continent, poised to be 2.5 billion-strong in 2050,[6] has already offered so much to the world, from the founding of culture, that is, the humanisation of the human, to its strength, wealth, genius across time and space; it has made possible and continuously fertilised the humanities at large, and, more specifically, the European humanities, bankrolled our modernities with centuries of free and forced labour, and alienated freedom, and embodied most of the features and aporia of the contemporary world, become symptomatic of the world's futures and the incarnation of the horizon of struggles for freedom. All these partake in what constitutes this continent's unique and formidable identity, of which it is not always fully aware.

It is precisely the need for reflexivity about one's historical trajectory, one's multiple, often contradictory identities always in process, that constitutes the conditions of necessity of a ciné-archival studies and *dispositif*. To make current and future generations in Africa and beyond aware of this very long and complex tradition of struggle, of invention and innovation, of creativity, of resilience and rebellion, in the face of the long and lingering legacies of the trauma of slavery and colonialism, the travails of neo-colonialism which accentuated her demise and decelerated the continent's ability to return on the world stage. So, too, Africa's difficulties and incompleteness of decolonisation processes, being the site post-independence, of various and unprecedented forms of political, economic and social experimentation, in light of its own internal inconsistencies and limitations and its difficult political transitions. All of this has indelibly scarred the continent's psyche and made it doubt itself and its humanity, and relinquish the domain of the framing of the human to others. Thus, a ciné-archival studies and *dispositif* becomes necessary to create bridges between the now and the then, the here and the there.

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6 According to Jack Gladstone (2019), 'For Africa, however, with a total population of 1.2 billion in 2015, the medium projection is for [the] population to reach 2.5 billion by 2050 and continue growing to 4.5 billion by 2100.'

The ability of the moving image to help make such a reclamation is at the heart of the necessity to seriously think the question of the archive. Indeed, the moving image is one of the most important apparatuses that documents our presence and passage in space and time. Unlike any other art and documentation form, it offers a lifelikeness and aura that mobilises unparalleled affective and cognitive investments.

The formation of a new object: An Afro-ciné-archival studies

Features and implications

This means that we are at a moment of the formation of a brand-new object of knowledge, with specific configurations, that relates to all other objects around the archival but that is irreducible to them, and indeed offers the archival a given set of inflections. This is all the more significant in a context in which, as in most disciplines in the humanities, the field of the film-archival is principally the preserve of Euro-American modes of discursivity. While this is a most important contribution in terms of ground-clearing gesture and for field establishing, it is also important that Africa-inflected discourses, in conversation with all existing discourses in the field of the film archival, also manage to emerge that would offer generalisable insight to the wider field. It is one of the conditions of desirability of the existence of an Africa-inflected ciné-archival studies. By this is meant a mode of discursivity that takes into account the geo-spatial and temporal coordinates of the African continent, the original trajectory of its historicity, the constitutive dimension of its radical opening to all aspects of the world, to cinema from all around the world as constitutive of its cinema.

This will involve the creation and/or consolidation of every aspect of the chain of archiving from the production and absorption of ideas and know-how, to the creation and sustenance of institutions and infrastructure, to consciousness raising and knowledge and know-how dissemination about the archival at all levels, beyond the professions of the archivist and the historian, into civil society, government and the ordinary citizenry, in order to make the archival matter to every single living and breathing subject. An Afro-ciné-archival project is therefore one whose horizon and project is to make the archival matter to all, now, and for an indefinite future, to secure commitment to sustain and support such endeavours financially, organisationally, intellectually, scientifically, technically, technologically.

Such a project would begin with the academicisation of the problematic, to systematically and academically take charge of the problems of the archival in Africa, so that academia become the staging ground for the reclaiming of the ciné-archival as an object. Part of the reason to lodge it in academia lies in the need to anchor it in the *longue durée* and make it the subject of intense interrogations and the place where indeed potential answers might be found.

Academicisation also ensures that intergenerational transmission will take place so that the ciné-archival remains a preoccupation for generations to come.

Within this context, the possibility to create undergraduate and graduate degree programmes, projects, seminars, symposia and conferences, research centres, bringing together and in active and generative conversation, fields as diverse as film and media studies, film and media production, history and historiography, library and archival studies, mathematics, chemistry, physics, curatorial studies, public policy, economics, law, business, diplomacy, architecture, education, philosophy, and other cognate fields appears indispensable to encompass the expanse of the ciné-archival as already theorised/theomorphised by the Ancient Egyptians.

Such a programme would be unique in the world in actively exploding knowledge silos and bringing together stakeholders often operating monadically in their own fields, making it a major step forward in producing knowledge about the archival and disseminating it. It would simultaneously produce thoughts and ideas as well as soldiers of the archive in all these domains. These ideas and thoughts would in turn form the ground upon which lobbying and advocacy toward all the stakeholders of the archival, and whose input and engagement will keep animating the thinking processes in a feedback loop. Such ideas would be used to mainstream ciné-archival issues in a centrifugal manner, while also keeping alive research and knowledge production centripetally.

The films and moving images preserved and restored may be used in any and every other branch of academic study by virtue of film's status as the art of arts, the form that encompasses all forms, and indeed that leaves no subject, theme or field unexplored, from diplomacy (the use of film as soft power) to all the modalities and forms of use of the film form to achieve given aims. The inclusion of film education from the elementary to the tertiary level will also contribute to the production of a ciné-literate citizen-subject, aware of the history of the form, of their continent's illustrious participation and contribution to it, and critically attentive to its manipulative as well as identity-generating/generative powers.

An Afro-ciné-archival studies will also have a research and development axis, which will consist in imagining new ways of thinking and practising the archival. This will include concern with issues related to the architecture of buildings which host archival material, to the amount, availability and quality of energy required to preserve cinematic material, issues related to bio-technological research regarding the recovery of archival material through inquiries around the articulation of the relationship between the eye, the ear and memory, the ability of human memory to retain, store, safeguard, archive information from the combined stimulations of the eye, the ear and the mind, its ability to recall said information, and our own ability to transcribe this again as/on unfolding film, potentially making human sensory memory a site of the archival as well (see Sanogo 2018). This research and development axis will

thus involve investigating alternative ways of archiving, not simply using African conceptions of the archival for theoretical purposes, but also for practices of the archival, indeed for innovative modes of archiving.

For instance, archival practices and imaginings of Ancient Egyptian civilisation (among other possible sites of inquiry and cultural formation throughout the continent's pluri-millennial history) may offer us original modes of thinking and practices of the archival. Through what this essay has referred to as the engodment or theomorphisation of archival ideas and imaginaries, it makes inseparable certain ideas of the relationship between the body and the archival, figuring the divine/the sacred or the human body as the site of the archival. This opens up the possibilities of further inquiries into the body as archive, the body's own archival possibilities which, although partially explored in other contexts, may not yet have been fully exhausted.

To what extent is the body itself an archival technology? What kinds of archives may exist in living as well as in well-preserved bodies? What would the ethics of such exploration be? Should everything be subject to archival extraction and preservation? What about the duty to forget? Should this also be included in the conversation around the duty to memory? Could technologies related to mummification and other forms of preservation in Ancient Egyptian cultures, or ideas underscoring them, be reconverted for contemporary preservations of moving image and sound technologies? How could this be done? Indeed, the fact that the scales of the archival in Ancient Egypt are articulated in millennial terms while those of the moving image and sound are thought of in hundreds of years, could offer us the occasion to revisit our preservation ideas and practices.

In other words, what would it take to succeed in preserving moving images and sounds for millennia? What new technologies of preservation might we need to invent for the purpose? If the human body can be preserved for millennia, why not the technology of the moving image, this arguably prosthetic invention of a bodily function? How would we embalm the moving image, as it were? How might we rescue the technology of moving-image preservation from the grips of myopic views of the futurity of transmission as taken hostage by a capitalist future-industrial complex?

In other words, does the moving image genuinely face preservation problems from the standpoint of technological and infrastructural research and innovation, or is it that research may have been made a handmaiden of a pro-capitalist short-term profit-driven project, which may be said to spare no efforts in preventing us from thinking beyond mere decades when it comes to the preservation of the moving image? What can African thinkers and scientists offer? What can African architects offer? Are bricks and mortar the only way of thinking the archival? Is the digital the last frontier of archival thinking? How to imagine a post-digital archival apparatus, more efficient, more invested,

confident and serene in its relationship to Time? These are important research questions that such a project might generate.

An Afro-ciné-archival dispositif

The academicisation of the ciné-archival and the production of knowledge and research on it are but a precondition for the full insertion and normalisation of ciné-archival issues in the polity at large. To make the ciné-archival part and parcel of the *rei publicae,* a *dispositif* must be put in place. As a reminder, Foucault defines the *dispositif* (translated into English as apparatus) as follows:

> What I'm trying to pick out with this term is, firstly, a thoroughly heterogenous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions – in short, the said as much as the unsaid. Such are the elements of the apparatus. The apparatus itself is the system of relations that can be established between these elements. (Foucault 1980, 194)

Translated in ciné-archival terms, this might mean, among many other things, not only the creation of an entire ecology of the archival ranging from its study to its actualisation through the creation, maintenance and reinforcement of institutions, technical, technological and economic infrastructure, but equally importantly, creating the possibility to seamlessly link within countries, across countries, through regions and across the continent, archival research, pedagogic, institutional, infrastructural and practice outfits that would create networks around the archival from the personal, the intimate and the local, to the national, the regional and the continental.

It means creating a continent-wide archival consciousness, databases on the ciné-archival, film and non-film. It entails different layers and levels of complexity, from the most advanced to the basic, of the question of the archival. Schools, universities, neighbourhoods, community groups, political parties, inter alia, all partake in the constitution of this ciné-archival constellation. There is a need to embed the ciné-archival into the fabric of life itself, into all aspects of the social formation, beyond the arcane discipline of the archons.

The ciné-archival also involves texts, legal frameworks, copyright issues, scientific, technical and technological research centres. The use of new technologies to make this possible is indispensable. Digitisation and imagining the post-digital as ways of thinking the archival, the establishment of labs, etc. are all part of the conversation. An entirely new ecology of the archival must be put in place to satisfy the hunger and needs of a continent that has the unique privilege to be at once the oldest and the youngest in the world, and is in lack and in search of relevant and (be)fitting models. This new and young population

needs to know its pasts, to secure its identities, to invent new identities in and for the future and to shape the destiny of the world. Part of this also involves the ability to intervene in the conception and creation of archival technology in order to put an end to what we might name the International Division of Archival Labor.

There is no reason in the twenty-first century for Africa to be the land where technologies are imported and consumed and not made, conceived and exported. This is part and parcel of the problematic of the *dispositif* that is at stake for this project. There is a need to set up relevant, dynamic and cutting-edge and innovative technology and infrastructure for the African continent to have access to its cinematic memory.

Some implications for practice and research

On practice

A few words must be said about the potential uses that film and other media makers may make of all that has been/would have been/will be salvaged, stored, preserved and restored in the expected ciné-archival studies and *dispositif*. Such a project would interpellate African film and media practitioners, armed with a historical awareness and consciousness to engage, thoughtfully, critically as well as ludically, with these images and sounds.[7]

Indeed, the potential for encyclopaedic work lies ahead with the ciné-archival image, or the archiveological. The ciné-archival offers a repository of images in hibernation, or suspended animation, awaiting reawakening by the keen and perceptive eye, ear and mind. These are images that refuse the notion that pastness is death, that await the possibility of permanent resurrection. Indeed, they remind us of the ontological resurrectibility of the moving image, or rather of the fact that it is imbued with a-to-be-resurrected-ness quality. The ciné-archival image not only resists the passing dimension of the past, but it also offers resistance to the present, to its vanity and pretence, its oppressions and excesses.

Part of this relies on the cognisance of the possibilities inherent in unmooring an image from its original context in order to reuse it in a new and present context for other aims (see Baron 2014; Russell 2018; Swender 2009). To work with the ciné-archival image is to be presented with the possibility to free the image from its time and make it speak to, of and for our time, by creating new

7 Such practice may be augmented with the Pan-African Federation of Filmmakers Archival Project (FEPACI) (see Sonogo 2018) which seeks to restructure the entire archival sector on the continent and to liberate films from the vaults. Of immediate relevance is the work of the FEPACI-FIAF Film Identification Project which seeks to identify, catalogue and make available films by Africans and on Africa, and currently held in each of the (at present) 164 FIAF-member and affiliate archives. The potential uses of said films for documentaries, fiction films, pedagogic uses, lobbying and others are infinite.

associations. Archiveology is thus by definition Kuleshovian, for it is premised on the associational principle.

Likewise, it may be argued that the cinematic principle is always already archival for its reliance on memory and recall. This duality of the ciné-archival image makes it ideal as a staging ground for alternative and counter-narratives. It makes it possible to break with continuity, to insert forms of discontinuity in the unfolding of time and helps produce new ways of seeing and thinking. Indeed, the discontinuous, characterised in cinema by the film-fragment, is one of the ultimate tools and weapons for such an endeavour, which may be used for subversive, restorative or generative purposes, through the art of montage, the cinematic gesture par excellence in which sound may be used against image, image against sound, text against both, or both against text, and so on and so forth, in single or multi-track and multi-channel creation.

Deploying such principles opens up infinite possibilities of revisitation of the very, very *longue durée* of African history, of the great empires, of the colonial moment, of decolonisation, of the construction of the new Africa, the new and conflicting narratives of said construction all the way to our current global moment. Coming from Africa, the land of untold and insufficiently told stories and histories, film and media practitioners may deploy these images to counter the hegemony of the European narrative and reclaim the pride of place of the African narrative which has been pushed into the background.[8]

Film and media practitioners' permanent engagement with such material is poised to guarantee its continued relevance through, among other possibilities, the (re)insertion of silenced, repressed or unprecedented voices, angles and points of view, claims for social justice, reparation, reconciliation, and indeed, radical revolution, inter alia. Through these, they will be able to keep the archive alive, make it come to life, make it a Per Ankh or house of life, as the Ancient Egyptians would have it.

It should be noted, however, that said narratives are not uncontested nor are they smooth. Just as Africa's place in the world, the African past and present may also be subject and open to contestation through, for instance, gender, race, nationality, class and other signifiers of difference. Indeed, practitioners must be reminded of some of the axiomatics of the archival image, that is, its radical openness, ontological untamability and fundamental irreducibility. It always has a punctum and is always already punctured by a punctum as Roland Barthes would have it (Barthes 1981). In that sense, there will always be the wind in the leaves as in the Lumière's *Baby's Breakfast* (1895).

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8 For instance, this ciné-archival project resonates with the General History of Africa (GHA) project, a six-decade-old project of African historians and UNESCO to rewrite the history of Africa, to rewrite narratives about the continent, indeed to write the archive of our archive as a *sine qua non* use of the past to critique the present.

Something will always escape both the reader and the maker of the moving image, because it always has surplus. It is always in excess and the context in which one approaches the moving/archival image will always enable that ontological surplus, immanent surplus. In other words, the archival image is and will always remain a chronically unfaithful lover. It will accept gifts from any suitor, wear them as long as they please the suitor currently present. Once another suitor emerges, it will again take more gifts from them and unapologetically wear them. It cannot and will not be suppressed. It is shard-filled, complex, mutually contradictory, open to active deconstruction. To this archiveological task, film and media practitioners will also devote themselves for a both critical and self-critical look at the continent's history.

On (African) film historical research

The investment in the ciné-archival image has potential implications not only for film and media practice, but also for film historical research and study, in particular on African film history. Indeed, it is unfortunately not possible, at present, to write an authoritative and detailed history of African cinema from the beginning of the cinema to the present, from the North to the South, the West to the East and the Central regions of the continent. What we have are often incomplete histories, focusing either on truncated dimensions of the national or on generalities about the continental. We are seldom able to properly account for the regional; we do not have a firm grasp on all aspects of the local; we are weak on the amateur tradition; on the so-called orphan film; we are still significantly lacking in terms of a transversal history of cinema on the continent.

What would it mean to write a history of cinema from early cinema to the present, linking events, initiatives, movements from country to country, between countries, between regions? The ciné-archival might make possible radical interventions in historiographic methodology. The rediscovery of Egyptian classics and the history of the commercial film tradition of the continent is yet to be written; the rediscovery of the long-standing non-fiction film tradition; the rediscovery of the avant-garde and experimental tradition; the rediscovery of the ciné-club cinema. The ciné-archival may allow us to go beyond what we might refer to as synecdochal history, where the part is often made to account for the whole. Instead it may make it possible to trace new cinematic routes, trajectories, re-periodise histories, influences and movements. Therein lie some of the promises of the ciné-archival.

From the continental to the national

Part of the effectiveness of such a ciné-archival studies, research and *dispositif* project lies in its grounding and anchoring in one place and time from which to animate and radiate across the rest of the continent and the world. The question of the national becomes central to the problematic, and the South African

national more specifically so, as South Africa seems to be one of the ideally suited places to do so, and in South Africa, the University of the Witwatersrand.

It is well known that South Africa has, since the 1990s, taken it upon itself, in the process and effort of reinventing itself in the aftermath of a very long colonial rule with the opprobrious apartheid regime as its apex, to articulate for itself the significance of the archival, the function of the archival in the construction and consolidation of a free, democratic, non-racial and accountable society, in the managing of its multiply contradictory and antagonistic pasts in order to invent a dynamic present and secure a harmonious future.

This titanic task has taken the form of studies, of reports, sometimes of conferences, including one organised at the University of the Witwatersrand (see, Hamilton et al. 2002), or of initiatives like the Archival Platform.[9] However, the extent to which these conversations have meaningfully and comprehensively included the field of the ciné-archival is open to question. Yet, the ciné-archival also involves the multiple ways in which South Africa should come to terms with its difficult and paradoxical cinematic past, one that for most of an entire century primarily marginalised the majority of its population, while at the same time, being at the forefront of some of the very first experiences of cinematic spectatorship on the continent and indeed even in the world.

A number of important questions seem to arise (which have probably been raised already by South Africans themselves): How to construct a cinematic present, anticipate a future of the moving image without grounding it in the past? What are the extremely complicated pasts of South African cinema? What to do with the cinema of apartheid? What to do with the cinema before 1948? What to do with an impossible legacy, that perhaps lasted longer here than in most of the rest of the continent, where decolonisation took place much earlier, where efforts to decolonise the moving image have been at work for a very, very long time? Do South African filmmakers invent a new past for themselves? Do they simply tie themselves to the obvious and sometimes unimaginative Hollywood tradition? What filiations do they fabricate for themselves in the context of a past predominantly constituted by ruinous ruins? Do they tie themselves to the global international art cinema circuit and produce primarily Film Festival Films? What kind of economies (moral, ethical, financial) are possible in such contexts?

Or better yet, do they tie themselves to the historically decolonising cinematic project of the founding fathers of African cinema, that is, the Ousmane Sembènes, the Med Hondos, the Djibril Diop Mambétys, and one of their own, the Lionel Ngakanes? Or still, do they enter into conversation with the boisterous

9 The Archival Platform is an independent platform for archival advocacy, networking and research, fostered by the Archive and Public Culture Research Initiative at the University of Cape Town and the Nelson Mandela Foundation, http://www.apc.uct.ac.za/apc/connections/archival-platform.

new popular cinema experiment in the continent's most populous nation, that is, Nollywood in Nigeria? Or better yet, do they invent an object that is encompassing of aspects of all the above yet situate themselves in the specificity of their historical situation? How do they safeguard this cinematic history in optimal conditions, access it, interrogate it and inscribe it durably into the polity? These seem to be important questions partaking of both the present and the destiny of the cinema in South Africa with regard to the ciné-archival that would animate many seminars, colloquia, conferences, courses and publications.

In effect, it might be argued that the embryo of a ciné-archival studies and *dispositif* is, in some diffuse way, already present in South Africa, and that it may already tackle these questions and in the process, constitute a springboard for a broader transcontinental venture. Indeed, South African universities collectively offer degrees in film studies and film production, media studies, as well as disciplines such as archival studies, history, international relations, law, education, political studies, philosophy in the humanities and chemistry, physics and computational mathematics. It is possible to bring these disparate fields together in conversation around the single project of the ciné-archival.

Likewise, important aspects of the *dispositif*, including the National Film, Video and Sound Archives, the National Film and Video Foundation, the Nelson Mandela Foundation, the various university archives (including Fort Hare), the Archival Platform, the Archive and Public Culture Research Initiative at the University of Cape Town, the History Workshop, community archives, private archives, rights archives, not to mention policy makers and funders may also be brought together around the ciné-archival project. It is not difficult to imagine the generative possibilities that such cross-pollination might enable, from the creation of a new and unprecedented ciné-archival community of study, research, pedagogy, practice and employment, to the potential regeneration or revivification of archival debates in South Africa, thanks to the intervention of the ciné-archival and to the expansion of formidable discussions around South African history, film and media history, and identity, which, together, may contribute to laying the foundation for the construction of Martin Luther King's famous 'beloved community'. For this alone, the ciné-archival would be worth our while.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored some of the conditions of possibility and desirability of the emergence of ciné-archival studies and *dispositif* on the African continent. Starting with the disconcerting incommensurability between the historical status of the continent as an/the archive of the world and the difficulties that exist with regard to broad institutionalisation, dissemination and mainstreaming of notions and practices of the archival, it has sought to render visible

a protean, dispersed and liminal object, which straddles the fields of theory, research and practice, and argued for the necessity of exploding boundaries in view of making way for a radical co-production of knowledge and enablement of innovative practice around the archival as a step toward the creation of a Pan-African subject/a *homo cinematographicus panafricanus*.

It has proposed the creation of an entirely new object, the Afro-ciné-archival, characterised by new scales, porous borders and ideally radical interdisciplinarity. If successful, such a project is poised to inevitably make an indelible difference on the map of the archival at all these levels, and indeed at the world level. It would arguably open up new horizons for study, research and practice. The time for and of the untimely may have come. Are we prepared to seize it?

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04

Reframing Film Studies in Africa: Towards New Pedagogic Terrains

Saër Maty Bâ

In guise of an introduction: Paving the way to (the) pro-vocations

The main aim of this chapter is to excavate particles in order to find novel pedagogic paths for teaching film in Africa, paths which pertain to culture, history and their theories, but also to science as both method and 'the proper attitude toward imagination and creation' (Asante 1990, v). 'Towards new pedagogic terrains' should signal that various traditions are used below to reach provisionally open(ed) ends, traditions shot through with the originality of a particular idea apt at distancing the chapter from other traditions (and theories and maps).

In short, the chapter seeks openings and open-mindedness, pluralism and expansion – of culture, mind, consciousness and knowledge – vis-à-vis the modern's relation to film (teaching) in Africa. It must, therefore, begin with making some heavy silences speak, that is, European and American knowledge systems pertaining to the cinema, which have long been obsolete theoretically, aesthetically and historically; their hegemony over African/global South systems has partly been responsible for their own obsolescence, although one must also point a finger at their rotten, always-already bankrupt foundations, that is race (or, dare I say, whiteness as trope), imperial colonialism and religion, all buttressed by unethical capital and the Maxim machine gun genocidal syndrome (Huard 2014).

In fact, the above are just a few of those monstrous (applied) knowledge systems' characteristics, yet enough of a sample and a valid lens to warrant arguing that in African contexts, these systems could never soundly conceptualise

the cinema – be they called European and American, Euro-American, or even Western, if one could go against the sane grain to believe that Western has not been mutated (mutilated?) beyond recognition.[1] Indeed, regarding Africa's relation to the cinema, concessions can no longer be made about what is taught and how, for it is time to transform that teaching and its contents, to reconstruct them from potent ruins. In so doing, one would need to think Africa seriously, which means to ban 'post'-ing concepts (all tired), to avoid pedestrian perceptions of who can teach (or not) the cinema called African, to grasp that Africans (perhaps, also, teachers of 'Africa' and teachers in Africa) could themselves constitute that cinema's worst enemies if/when they are unable to de-link, de-locate themselves and their teaching from Euro-American visual hegemony.

The African must avoid being an outsider, home-and-away, meaning they should not perceive so-called Others as outsiders – Others who may, actually, have done the crucial epistemic work necessary to become insiders of African cinema.[2] Furthermore, one must get to the bottom of the Euro-American invention of Africa from 1896 onwards, and then find tools beyond divided and diverse methods, that is, a conceptual-structural framework made – in this chapter – of Interiors, Anteriors, Exteriors and drawn from Molefi Kete Asante's Afrocentric perspective which he presents as an examination of 'what constitutes the discipline of Africalogy; … a discussion of origins and issues related to historical developments in the writing of Africa; and … a presentation of approaches to fields other than Africalogy with particular emphasis on critique' (Asante 1990, vi–vii).

We shall see that I have transformed Asante's triptych so that: Anteriors comes first to examine how filmic images of Africa have been written about, Interiors enquires if those images have actually shaped a discipline we can name African cinema from an African standpoint, and Exteriors focuses on critical approaches to Africa (written and filmic). Such transformation is warranted, given that I first started sketching the tryptic as a methodological tool eight years ago, for an essay responding to and problematising the then simplistic, binary debate on Outsiders' gaze on Africa (Bâ 2014). That sketching was brief, the essay's remit narrow, my interest in African cinema ongoing, and the tryptic a work in progress, which I have since developed and opened up to engage with wider gazes and approaches pertaining to film, film studies and the cinema in/and Africa, but also to Africa seen in global contexts. The outcome – an expanded tryptic framework, whose constitutive elements have been critically

1 Some thinkers have even proclaimed the death of the Western; see for example Kempf (2013).

2 The protracted, never-ending political debate over what 'African cinema'/'African cinemas' and 'African film' are supposed to be, or not, does not constitute the focal point of this chapter; suffice it to say that they are transnational, within and beyond the African continent. For a useful critical evaluation of this debate, see Allison McGuffie (2014).

re-examined – is presented in this chapter for the first time, thereby reiterating its seamless embodiment of pedagogy, film and its studies, as well as of Africa. And yet, equally obvious to me has been the fact that the opened-up framework must first and foremost be prefaced by and related to the philosophy of culture, knowledge, history and traditions, to name but four areas looked at below.

In short, the teaching of African cinema needs constant intersection between epistemology, methodology and method – rather than a clear-cut separation, line up and/or juxtaposition of the three – because, to a cinema emanating from the African systems of knowledge, and faced with the onslaught of non-Euro-American ones, it seems nonsensical to not intersect, uninterruptedly, questions of who can know and what can be known (epistemology), the theoretical perspectives and research procedures emanating from a(ny) given epistemology (that is methodology), as well as the specific techniques used to study a given research problem (method).[3] Furthermore, the teaching of African cinema requires the teacher to grasp discursive processes as inscribed in ideological connections and conditions, while both the intersection and the understanding call for specific visual texts through which one could teach and argue the above-mentioned framework and its relations.[4] Thus, the chapter is divided into two parts. Part one delineates the areas which preface its tryptic framework of investigation and explores how complex their relation to film studies in Africa can be. Part two re-presents the transformed version of the tryptic, readied for studies of film in African contexts, at a time when modernity's uncertainties, breaks and discontinuities are still wreaking havoc on them.

Part one: Excavating pre-faces

African thinker Ali Abdi, writing on European and African thought systems and philosophies of education, argues that 'while Europeans de-historicised Africa, Africans were able to see the world as multi-centric' (Abdi 2011, 142). He is echoed within the anti-colonial and anti-Eurocentrism background of contemporary African philosophy (Bâ 2012), a philosophy interested in knowledge without: considering Descartes's cogito as 'the classical philosophical gesture', tracing the subject of knowledge to such German philosophers as Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and Ludwig Feuerbach or attempting to squeeze it out of either of these two (Rancière 2011, 146).

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3 For further details on why the above-mentioned intersection is crucial, as well as on the difference between 'methodology' and 'method', see Hesse-Biber et al. (2010), and Bâ and Higbee (2012).

4 For example, the Lumières' commissions (1896–1902), *A Zulu's Heart* (1908), *De Voortrekkers* (1916), *The Battle of Algiers* (1966), *Testament* (1988) and *The Night of Truth* (2004).

Instead, I would suggest that philosophical background owes to work done on Africa by African thinkers, particularly through its ability to demonstrate, as does Kwame Anthony Appiah in *In my Father's House* (1992), that Europe had neither culturally affected nor directly colonised most of Africa (West, East and South, for example) until the very late nineteenth century, leading Appiah to conclude that 'European cultural influence in Africa before the twentieth century was extremely limited [and that] the major cultural impact of Europe is largely a product of the period since the First World War' (Appiah 1992, 174).[5] Contemporary African philosophers[6] are in line with Appiah's theses, that is, they are arguing for 'the persistent power of [the Africans'] own cognitive and moral traditions' (Appiah 1992, 7), namely for African psychic evasion of or resistance to European colonial imperialism's penetration and control, it being understood that, I would argue, such posture or positioning must be both a state of mind and a practice geared towards a perpetual revolutionary struggle or 'permanent revolution' – to invoke Marx and Engels's original concept developed and practised by Leon Trotsky.

'Permanent revolution' is aware of 'uneven historic process' and 'the law of uneven development' (Trotsky 1931, 26); proletarian in nature and democratic-growing-over-to-being-socialist, it aims to liquidate class society as well. 'Permanent revolution' is wary of the national, while warning and exhorting us to be internationalists thinking in the international arena, for, as Trotsky puts it in another context, breaking with 'the internationalist position always and invariably leads to national messianism, that is, to attributing special superiorities and qualities to one's own country, which allegedly permit it to play a role to which other countries cannot attain' (Trotsky 1931, 143–144).[7] Whether we use 'countries' or substitute 'universities' or 'academia', Trotsky's internationalism remains useful for the issue of teaching film in African (modern) contexts.

In effect, on the one hand Trotsky's internationalism exposes national navel-gazing mixed with epistemic slips, which may lead one to argue, unsafely (as shown below), that the Khoisan people are central to the making of South African modernity and of 'the modernistic project in the New South Africa' (Masilela 2005, xx). The issue is not that one should avoid the national as beginning – after all, 'the socialist revolution begins on the national arena' (Trotsky 1931, 143) – but, rather, how such a starting point may damage one's thought process to such an extent that one is unable to see its sine qua non conditions for existing in the first place, that is, international unfolding or world-scale completion.

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5 For further details see pp. 173–180.

6 Typical examples would include Kwame Nkrumah and Julius Nyerere, whose nationalist-ideological system of thought draws on traditional African socialism and family values; that socio-political system searches for African freedom, via African mental liberation and humanist traditions.

7 For further details on 'permanent revolution', see Trotsky (1931, 10–12, 26, 142–143).

In this line of thinking, filmmaker Teddy E. Mattera reminds us that 'Cinema is an ancient tradition in African societies', that 'The first peoples of the world – the Khoi and San[8] of Southern Africa – have often had to tell the visual and aural story of the land around them in the burning embers of the desert fire', and that 'the men tell of the hunt … purely by reading the tracks or imprints on the sand and infusing them with meaning' (2012, 200–201).[9] It follows that, given the importance of the Khoisan to Africa as a whole, in and out of modernity, Masilela (2005) and Tomaselli (2006) should have framed their argument, perhaps, in terms of African modernity/the African modernistic project (even if they intended to address South African cinemas as case study) not least because, in the same text, that is, *Encountering Modernity: Twentieth Century South African Cinemas*, Tomaselli argues that modernity is responsible for the rise of national identities, racial categorisations and the concept of fixed identities (Tomaselli 2006, 95), while he and Masilela's epistemic slip raises the question of how Africa should be conceptualised.

The point is that Tomaselli, in particular, is resting his argument on a time-bomb of a contradiction – in terms and essence. If modernity can be blamed for the negativities or fixed hierarchies known as 'nation' and 'race' – with each one's veins, entrails and shell deeply infected by 'identity' like cells by a virus – it seems to make little sense to be nationalising, to be reductively appropriating the Khoisan who are transcultural and transnational as for the straitjacket of the 'national'/South African cinema(s). The intention is correct, whereas the conceptualisation of the argument built to set it in motion, to put it in place, to implement it, remains flawed. If the Khoisan transcend both the South African (and even Botswanan) borders, if they had been before modernity, which they outlive, with the type of reach identified by Mattera, then one has no choice but see them through a wider time frame, a larger cultural mass, a bigger space than 'the centre of the making of South African modernity' (Masilela 2005, xx).

And if one does this, then one's conclusions, the theories and practices one would draw from the process, would always-already transcend the national in order to look out towards the international – the national being, in historical terms, a recent and ethereal invention. With the same line of thinking, it does not matter if one has been video-documenting and theorising the issue for decades on end – as Tomaselli has done since the 1980s – or the approach used to do so. It is flawed. Let us look at that flaw from another angle, namely Tomaselli's (2006, 95–107) take on 'black' and 'blackness' in relation to theoretical perspectives. Of course, if, as Tomaselli does, one starts one's reasoning from/with/through

8 There is considerable debate, both within the academy and outside of it, about what nomenclature to apply.

9 See, for example, Lewis-Williams (2002) for arguments made by a pioneering proponent of rock art as abstract representations of lived and spiritual experiences.

South Africa's (national) apartheid modernist project, wherein 'race became coterminous with both culture and identity' (Tomaselli 2006, 95), one will never get out of that determinism; nor is one going to get anywhere with one's 'attempt to fracture it more fundamentally' (Tomaselli 2006, 95), simply because it is not about the tools (films) one is attempting to break rocks/theorise with – it is about the fact that one is breaking rocks in Robben Island, in South Africa, within the apartheid modernist project.

And this is not saying anything yet, not even if I quoted Tomaselli saying in 2006 (which means, too late) 'African cinema studies are often reductively assumed to be the study of "black", mainly West African Francophone cinema'. This is not saying anything, precisely because the major issue here, the flawed argument, is the binary and restrictive way in which Tomaselli is asking questions of blackness, whiteness and race: 'Ousmane Sembène (1982: 77) once said that Jean Rouch's film *Moi, un Noir* (1958) could have been made by an African. Does "blackness", then, necessarily imply African origin?' (Tomaselli 2006, 95). Indeed, both the juxtaposition and generalisation are awkward and unsafe – not even mentioning that, within black studies, black cinema and African cinema studies had already moved on from such a line of thinking/questioning, Gladstone L. Yearwood's book *Black Film as Signifying Practice* (2000) being just one reason why that was the case – in addition to the fact that, yes, blackness does necessarily imply African origin.

Tomaselli goes on to ask: 'can a white director make a film reflecting/negotiating/describing the "black" experience?', to which yes is the answer, and there is no need to rely on spectatorship whatsoever to be in a position to say so. Then, it seems fair to say that Tomaselli's questions, even when considered rhetorical, do pose a problem and constitute both sides of the same coin, questions which the fact of talking about the Khoisan makes nothing but obsolete. In short, national navel-gazing mixed with epistemic slips mean that, even if one should not avoid the national as starting point, one must as well see its prerequisites, that is, world-scale completion. Therefore, how Africa should be conceptualised is a central question we need to examine below.

Meanwhile, on the other hand, Trotsky's internationalist argument is useful for the African modern context pertaining to academia in connection with other forms of institutional film teaching, perhaps, but certainly regarding knowledge as a system lodged inside that uneven machine called 'university'. Internationally, universities call for robust and discrete analyses which target an ideology of class domination within knowledge construction, the universities' own ideology being articulated 'in the very division of knowledge, in the forms of its appropriation, … in the university institution as such' but also in 'the division between disciplines, [and] in the organization of departments – all of which realize the … hierarchy of knowledge' (Bâ 2012, 284, quoting Rancière 2011,

142). All the above points a finger at one crucial epistemic question, not to be evaded or avoided: what is 'Africa' (about)?

Africa is made of events, politics and personal experiences found in history books, memoirs, travel guides and films; Africa is at once a concept and idea that have always been in motion, shifting; Africa is an ambiguous space, centre (for some), origin and myth; and Africa is a source of exodus, dispersal, return and refuge. Processes of grasping Africa and Africans (continental and diasporic) should always go through Africa's untidy historical ties with Europe, where philosophers like Hegel have proclaimed African space to be a-historical, African personhood savage, and African systems of thought non-speculative and non-critical (Bâ 2012, 291). Such racist claims notwithstanding, Africa is 'a usable identity', if we bear in mind that we belong to diverse communities with local customs, forget the dream of one African state while staying awake to 'the complexly different trajectories' Africa's numerous languages and cultures have taken (Appiah 1992, 180). In summary, Africa is an 'archipelago of diversities' (Compagnon 1992, 113) to be grasped through processes capable of taking into account the fact that knowledge is a system with specific contents inconceivable outside their forms of appropriation: acquisition, transmission, control and use (Rancière 2011, 143).

That said, contra Rancière I would argue that, in an African context, constructing knowledge cannot afford to always or truthfully be controlled by a dominant class. If that were so, one/I would be unable to reframe modernity through film teaching, precisely because that reframing rejects the dominant-class liberalism and fundamentalism, which bleed into and nurture questions of methodological orthodoxy. What is more, akin to Derrida, my approach to both knowledge and film teaching in an African context sees value in practising *à contretemps*, in being out of step (Derrida 2008, 213–269): this chapter is, through its generation of contact zones and other spaces for engagement, therefore positioned *à contretemps* in order to throw theoretical orthodoxy and fixity into deep crisis; it scraps the idea of pure origin, because origin is an invention, while invention occurs within the present of a supposedly whole past, at the same time as it dives into ruins. That is because ruins confirm structures as ephemeral while echoing memory, ruins crumble in the present but come from the past, whereas memory signifies the past but is lived in the present.

With this line of thinking, if, as V.Y. Mudimbe (2016a) argues, colonial-era-trained African artists were converted or opened to western colonialism's 'organic reality of modernity', then Western traditions, embodied in discourses, values, aesthetics and the exchange economy, must have been up for grabs for longer than that and, I would argue, Africans have had the knowledge and set of critical tools to deal with Western traditions for centuries, wherever the latter may have geo-located their own ruins. Indeed, through our ancient systems of knowledge, we have made 'a lasting impact on the Western world'

(Asante 1990;[10] Mudimbe 2016a). And, as such, any attempt to conceptualise film teaching or cinema per se in Africa through a Western lens leads to serious errors, mistakes that we could not afford in the past and certainly cannot today – if, that is, we believe in the dialectical character of a modernity which, additionally, is always-already being constructed with its own 'constant pull towards the future' (Tomaselli 2006, 7).

We must remember that fixed theories/methods/methodologies of rationality colonise both mind and psyche; these fixities are damaging in their attempt to please our lower instincts, thereby making us crave 'intellectual security in the form of clarity, precision, "objectivity", "truth", all of which culminates in an impoverishment of history, and of existence itself' (Feyerabend 2010, 12) – a very serious risk, not worth taking at all. Consequently, the needed labour just sketched must be pursued relentlessly, whether or not we call it 'de-Westernizing', 'tracing de-Westernizing gestures in film theory and practice' (Bâ and Higby 2012, 3), and so on. In concrete terms, engaging Africa's relation to film/the cinema demands foregrounding a package that comprises three interconnected sets: (1) her-stories, his-tories, critical and practice-based theories; (2) selected filmmakers; and (3) recent attempts to de-westernise Film Studies which take outsiders' filmic gaze on Africa seriously.

Regarding her-stories, his-tories, critical and practice-based theories, a potent case to study would be Johannesburg-born South African of Hungarian-German background, Patti Gaal-Holmes – art historian, researcher, writer and experimental filmmaker – whose work is influenced by her cross-cultural background. Gaal-Holmes's interests include hybridity and unconfinement by fixed parameters, tropes she excavates with questions like 'How is the text infused by what is lived?' (Gaal-Holmes 2012, 195).[11]

Selected filmmakers would include but not be limited to Djibril Diop-Mambéty, Glauber Rocha (1939–1981), John Akomfrah, Abderrahmane Sissako, Julie Dash, Teddy E. Mattera, Jean Rouch (1917–2004), Wanuri Kahiu, Fanta Régina Nacro, Jean-Pierre Békolo, Gilo Pontecorvo (1919–2006), and Mehdi Charef. The latter, for example, is at once African, Algerian, European and French; he is also a migrant, diasporic and inter-/transnational filmmaker whose work reflects both his own complex personhood and a filmmaking process wherein film signifies an unending process of adjusting intention to possibility which, in turn, 'mirrors in some respect the vicissitudes of migration' (Jones 2010 quoted in Bâ 2012, 286). Charef's *Summer of '62* (2007), about the last summer and spring of the

10 'The foundation of all African speculation in religion, art, ethics, moral customs, and aesthetics are derived from systems of knowledge found in ancient Egypt' (Asante 1990, 47).

11 On Gaal-Holmes, see https://www.axisweb.org/p/pattigaal-holmes/; https://www.artspace.co.uk/artists/pattigaalholmes/; https://aub.ac.uk/research-2017/dr-patti-gaalholmes

Algerian war of independence (1954–1962) as seen through the eyes of an 11 year old, would be apt for illustrative discussion here.

Last but not least, to de-Westernise Film Studies involves four tasks: define the de-Westernising process, trace its gestures in film theory and practice, connect it to possible moves of alterity, and frame de-Westernising Film Studies as an emergent method of rethinking binary approaches to Film Studies,[12] particularly in connection to 'the west and the rest in cinema (as the term "world cinema" has tended to suggest)', for the sake of proposing novel methodologies leading to 'an alternative "un-centered" version of knowledge' that gives credit to a multiplicity of viewpoints which allows us to reach 'original and innovative ways of studying film history, theory and practice in a globalized context' (Bâ and Higbee 2012, 13).

It follows that the above package triggers if not nurtures permanent revolution, because it generates (for its user) possibilities and positionings, in a field of signifying practices fuelled by three further sets of – again – intersected processes: concession, transformation and reconstruction. No concession should be made on what is taught and how it is taught, while, of course, not losing sight of institutional politics, uneven sources of funding, and so on – seemingly, nothing but hierarchies and dominant-class privileges to be challenged as part of processes to make the teaching revolution permanent, a revolution which, to draw on Trotsky (1931, 10), 'makes no compromise with any single form of class rule [and] goes to war against reaction from without'. That teaching revolution ushers in transformation in order to radically numb and render useless any attempts at salvaging the above-mentioned Western ruins. Then African reconstruction – open-ended and only effective as and when more work is done on and with it – can complete the set.[13] Thus, what possibilities and positionings do these processes birth? What is to be done?

First, think Africa seriously and be wary of post-ing concepts – postcolonial, postcolony, postmodern, and so on; second, be flexible regarding who might be entitled to teach African cinema; and third, emphasise that Africans (and teachers of Africa, and teachers in Africa) must de-link, de-locate their teaching from Euro-American visual hegemony. Stated differently, within the field of African cinema, Africans must avoid becoming outsiders home-and-away, as already mentioned for example by perceiving so-called Others as outsiders, due to the latter's phenotype, race, nationality, sexuality or gender, because those Others may actually have done the epistemic labour necessary to becoming insiders in/teachers of African cinema. Sheila J. Petty, distinguished scholar of

12 Film Studies and 'emergent method' is an ongoing theoretical project that I first explored in *De-Westernizing Film Studies*; see Bâ and Higbee (2012, 1–16).

13 Reconstruction emerges from potent ruins of African making first, and then if/when needed, from non-African ones – but never first or exclusively of the latter.

African and African diasporic cinemas, should feature at the top end of any list of so-called 'Outsiders' (see Petty 2008).[14] At this juncture, what is to be taught, and how, needs elaborating upon, a task I shall turn to next.

In essence, the question of teaching African cinema with/in a modern framework must get to the bottom of the Euro-American invention of Africa, from 1896 onwards. That invention embodies a heavy dose of a Hegelian posturing according to which Africa equals obscurity,[15] when in fact the same posture belies a European pathology: Africa was obscure only because Europe neither knew Africa nor wanted to believe in African historicity. Thus, first there were the Lumières's commissions (1896–1902), followed by a deluge of a Euro-American or Westerner's gaze upon Africa, via ethnography, anthropology, and filmmaking; that gaze remained dominant in filmic representations of Africa during the first half of the twentieth century.[16] But then, asking the nagging question of how these outsiders had managed to invent Africa in the first place, as we must, it becomes clear that they had done so through radical silencing of African discourses or of conversion of those same discourses into Western ones, an epistemic (and Maxim gun) violence which did generate, eventually, some African dependence on a Western epistemological order. As a case in point, in French colonies, the 1934 Laval Decree forbade Africans from making films or radio programmes; it remained more or less unchanged until political independence 25 years later (Bâ 2014, 314).

As a result, useful here is a Mudimbian search for an African *gnosis* (knowledge), an investigation of the possibility of talking about African knowledge and how to frame it, but also in placing African *gnosis* within a wider body of knowledge made of 'discourses on African societies, cultures, and peoples as signs of something else' (Mudimbe 1988, ix), a location which makes possible a perpetually fluid and continuous questioning of the knowledge through which the same discourses reflect, embody or affect filmic approaches to Africa (Bâ 2014, 314). Simultaneously, we must use filmic examples to investigate the above-mentioned outsider's filmic invention of Africa, move beyond the epistemic dead end of denouncing its racism and, therefore, be in a position to transform that problematic way of seeing Africa.

A case in point is *De Voortrekkers/Winning a Continent* (1916), about white refugees called Boers/Afrikaners searching for new land in Southern Africa. One could add *They Built a Nation* (1938), directed by the English cinematographer of *De Voortrekkers* Joseph Albrecht: the film's bombastic, inaccurate and

14 See Bâ and Higbee (2012, 67–80) or Petty's book *Contact Zones: Memory, Origins and Discourses in Black Diasporic Cinema*, (2008).

15 Here, reference is being made to Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's *Philosophy of History* (1873) and see: https://metadave.wordpress.com/2007/11/10/hegel-on-africans-1873/

16 It is still going on today: see, for example, Gabay's *Imagining Africa: Whiteness and the Western Gaze* (2018).

colonial-racist rhetoric masks yet other, more pertinent connections between white refugism, race, class and labour in the Southern African region of the early twentieth century (Bâ 2012, 296). My critique of *De Voortrekkers/Winning a Continent*, made elsewhere, remains relevant for the argument unfolding here:

> Based on the Boers' Great Trek, the 'impetus for this migration was a desire to escape from British rule, which threatened the Boers' slave economy. This historical background, however, is suppressed in the film' (Davis 1996, 29). *De Voortrekkers* incarnates invention and history as imperialism, because, despite being an outsider's racist view of Africa, it was rated both an icon for celebrating a fictitious 'Afrikaner nation' and 'South Africa's national film' (Maingard 2007, 17). *De Voortrekkers* also illustrates how to create an African dependence on a western epistemological order … American director Shaw was attracted to colonial issues; scriptwriter and historian Gustav Preller promoted white nationalism and was anti-black/-Zulu; the Boers won a piece of land, not a continent; and the Zulu are erased from the film's racist, invented or emasculated nation and history (Bâ 2010, 366-67).[17] … The discourses embodied in films like *De Voortrekkers* … need to be re-located in a mixed space showing their limitations: a space neither completely colonial nor entirely postcolonial. *De Voortrekkers* was and still is a benchmark for a cinema of apartheid and a contribution to the demise of that system. Constructions and reproductions of white national identity were and are being undone in the post-apartheid era, and *De Voortrekkers*'s myth of nation-building and national cinema had to be and must be transformed for the sake of black participation. Furthermore, since Mandela left prison in 1990 – kick-starting the treacherous process of atonement, truth and reconciliation – South Africa shows that the binary opposition apartheid/post-apartheid or white/black holds no viable solutions. (Bâ 2014, 314)[18]

In summary, to get to the bottom of the Euro-American invention of Africa means to remember Asante's point that Africans are definitely not obscure to their own recorders, musicians, historians, epics, myths and chronicles (Asante 1990, 32). Next, common tools must be found beyond diverse methods of teaching film in Africa; the aim is to be on a 'different road of critical theory, that is the one

17 See also Tomaselli (2006, 127–130).

18 In the South African context, black participation has never been a straightforward issue, at least, ever since apartheid targeted the independent black economy with scores of prohibitions. One by-product of such prohibitions is what John Campbell calls 'a black vacuum filled with [black] African immigrants [to South Africa]', which, in turn, has given rise to black-on-black crime in the form of anti-foreigner attacks (cfr.org 2019).

stepping outside the historical moment', according to Asante, and 'might permit new interpretations, new criticisms, ultimately the acquisition of new knowledge' (Asante 1990, 5). Hence the conceptual-structural framework presented below is useful not only for analysing how Africa is seen by outsiders (see Bå 2014, 315–316), but also for questions around invention, ideation and method pertaining to Africa, issues to be addressed with and through film, a medium Ntongela Masilela (2005, xx) rightly calls 'the visual technology of modernity'.

Part two

Transformative tryptic anteriors: On film historians

Asante is on point when he argues that 'if we were to state explicitly our debt to Kemet [Ancient Egypt], we would have to say they gave us a sense of the possible. We owe to them the basis of science, art, ethical teachings, religion, dance, monarchy, and ritual drama' (Asante 1990, 48). This is because Asante does not root modern African identity in an imagined or imaginary history; nor does he either view the past as a time of wholeness and unity or give in to yet another critique Appiah levels at so-called Egyptianists who 'tie us to the values and beliefs of the past', thereby distracting us from present problems and future hopes (Appiah 1992, 176).

Instead, as already mentioned, Asante crafts constitutive elements for 'Africalogy', a discipline of interest(s) to my present framework only in terms of its visual-culture dimension with which we can easily grasp deceptively simple yet profound statements, such as Mattera's 'Cinema is an ancient tradition in African societies' (Mattera 2012, 200). Indeed, we – Africans, filmmakers, visual culturists – should pay attention when, in the Anteriors section of *Kemet, Afrocentricity and Knowledge*, Asante tells us that the introduction of measure, colour and right ordering of symbols 'as the premises for perfection' are owed to Kemetic art – not to simple and austere Greek art – and that no other society had ever been more attentive to the placing of symbols and icons for the achievement of aesthetic effect; Kemet has established what remains 'the standard by which the African world and numerous other societies evaluate their artistic productions', that is, balance, timing, rhythm or right ordering, and colour contrast (Asante 1990, 49).[19]

I would thus argue that Asante might as well have been writing about Mattera's cinema-as-ancient-African-societal-tradition – with all the historical discontinuities, tendencies, ruptures and new artistic imaginings that that would have implied. After all, film has memory, film is an artwork we can approach

19 See ways in which art historian E.H. Gombrich does not account for the complexity of Ancient Kemetic art in his otherwise very useful book, *The Story of Art* (1950).

the same way Mudimbe does contemporary African art: sociologically, with attention to history but mainly with a focus on 'incidences of conversion, patterns of discontinuity, and conflicting or complementary influences' (Mudimbe 2016b, 201).[20] Differently stated, reading and teaching film are no different; they must be imbued with Mudimbe's idea that in Africa 'worked objects', from drawings and scarifications to painted bodies, 'perpetuate as memories of a locus'; they are preservation processes but remain open to revision and canon-reinterpretation. It follows that, in my view, film in Africa is better off in the hands of those 'specialists of memory' who create and transform, but are equally faithful to 'their vocation and responsibility: to transmit a heritage and preserve its past' (Mudimbe 2016a, 199).[21] Therefore, in Africa, teaching film, a medium and memory object open to a history socially practised, should go through an understanding of Asante's tryptic, beginning with Anteriors.

Anteriors focuses exclusively on writers in order to examine how filmic images of Africa have been written about. The point is to grasp that when considering Africa, one needs an overview of film history-writing on filmic images of Africa, including an attempt to understand how such images come across in the history of African Film Studies. Hence the already expressed methodological need to determine a starting point, 1896, because, prior to the first-ever projector being used in Africa, that continent had already developed cultural practices which past and contemporary perceptions of filmic gazes could engage.

In other words, from 6 000 BC to the twenty-first century, African *gnosis* has been conveyed through both oral and written traditions. And a film historian must be aware of African written traditions, use these in their work – not overlook them – given that there are up to three main writing systems in Africa: (1) pictograms – written (drawn, painted, shaped) on human skin, walls, mud, sand, metal, bark or paper 'in a manner representative of some object of the visual world'; (2) ideograms – written (drawn, shaped, painted, carved) on materials and 'used to state an idea'; and (3) syllabic scripts – Africans were the first humans to 'script' as a matter of communicative record, the most extensive and impressive record of this having been left by Ancient Egyptians (Asante 1990, 73, 77).

Furthermore, at the same time as film historians show their awareness of African written traditions in their work, they must equate acquisition and possession of knowledge to being cultured. 'Culture' designates the shared values, attitudes, predispositions and behaviour patterns of a human group which can be transmitted; culture can be found, Asante goes on to argue, in

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20 For a recent, and pertinent, sociological approach to (African) film, see Valérie Orlando's *New African Cinema* (2017).

21 See also work done in and with archives by scholars such as Aboubakar Sanogo (a contributor to this volume).

'world voices, world views, cosmogonies, institutions, ideas, myths, epics, and symbols' (Asante 1990, 118). Any produced images of Africa should therefore, inevitably, encourage us to perceive African film as a form of thought, while knowledge preservation itself must rely on retentive means like memory, writing, film, museums, libraries, galleries and archives. It follows that the film historian's writing should include how knowledge and culture are to be approached; that historian's writing seems vital to teaching film in an African context, for, if badly put together and/or handled, it may engender flawed histories (and, perhaps, flawed historians) of Film Studies in Africa.

For example, N. Frank Ukadike's seminal *Black African Cinema* (1994) argues pertinently for this cinema's possession of authentically African cinematic codes whose existence had preceded the colonialist-missionary assaults on the continent. Yet when it comes to identifying and linking such codes to an authentic black African cinema, Ukadike frames authenticity 'in terms of African oral traditions': his argument is thereby flawed, for it wipes out Africa's writing traditions while overlooking African cinema's pre-birth, issues of which go beyond the oral in order to embrace the written or writerly visualisation of oral traditions (minus help from Western technology). Without writing traditions, the distinctive modes of African civilisation could not have been shaped and moulded for centuries, before outside influence (4 000 years prior to the Arabs), nor could Kemet have been 'preeminent in art, literature, astronomy, geometry, and ethics' (Asante 1990, 34, 48). Ultimately then, the centuries-old, mature African communication systems must always be put in contact with colonial and postcolonial censorship, as well as with outsiders' filmic views of Africa. Interiors methodology could facilitate that contact; it could be their contact zone.

Interiors: On image-makers

The question 'How do we gather meaning out of African or other existence?' (Asante 1990, 8) interests the Interiors methodology, which is about African image-makers and African image-making, because Interiors' main focus is on whether or not, from an African standpoint, these images have actually shaped a discipline we can name African cinema. Interiors goes even further to ask where, beyond being looked at through racism and denouncing racism, Outsiders' filmic views of Africa could fit in that potentiality of a framework for African cinema. This is a complex question, given that the categories 'insider' and 'outsider' are akin to hooked atoms to be disentangled always at one's own peril.

Thus, it might be useful to know that the Interiors methodology comprises very heterogeneous views, and shall continue to do so; Paulin Soumanou Vieyra (1969, 1972) believes that African cinema is not determined by Western critics' approval at the same time as an Afrocentricity-friendly stream, whose concept of African cultural interiority might be too restrictive or missing the point, is at play within the same Interiors methodology. As a case in point, even a powerful

and incisive magical-realist film on slavery like Haile Gerima's *Sankofa* (1993) also finds itself bathed through-and-through in such a stream. *Sankofa* indulges in racial-Afrocentric binaries and essentialisms (mainly through the shaping of its characters and their existential journeying) to the extent that its idea of Africa overlooks Africa's own transcendence of geographical limits and cross-pollination with exilic, diasporic and Outsiders' (to Africa) cultures and stories. Worse, *Sankofa*'s Afrocentricity does not seem able to account for or take into account Outsiders' filmic views of Africa as able to signify an idea of Africa, an African idea, let alone to acknowledge what I would name accented multi-sited consciousness.

Yet, that Outsiders' idea of Africa must be taken seriously, and for that to happen, one must accept that 'African birth does not make one Afrocentric; Afrocentricity … must be learned and practiced' (Asante 1990, 115). In principle then, anyone could access the interiors of an African idea while Afrocentricity itself must remain a participatory discipline, concept and activity. As a result, the Interiors methodology must be opened up to such possibilities in order to account for films which, I would argue, should be considered either Afrocentric – for example, *The Battle of Algiers* (1966) and *Summer of '62* (2007), which problematise Algeria's war of independence – or imbued with an accented multi-sited consciousness straddling continents and cultures – such as Mira Nair's *Mississippi Masala* (1991), about the 1972 expulsions of South Asians from Uganda and the consequences for them. In summary, it would seem that Anteriors and Interiors are always affected by the Exteriors methodology, to which I will now turn.

Exteriors: For critics

Asante's Exteriors critiques scores of approaches, from Ralph Ellison's novel *The Invisible Man* (1952) to Marxism, for example, in order to expose their lack of Afrocentricity and Africalogy. My own articulation of an Exteriors methodology favours the exposition of any inability 'to tear oneself away from the imposition of a European domination' (Asante 1990, 192). In so doing, Exteriors encourages current and future critics to identify and expose approaches to Africa (written and filmic) whose claim is that Africans must use their cinema to reproduce their cultural differences – as well as dis-able these same approaches.

A quintessential case in point would be writers André Gardies's (1989) and Pierre Haffner's (1978) belief that African cinema, though distinct from other cinemas, still lacked an inherent, authentic essence and that, if contemporary African filmmakers did not develop a school – like the Italians, Russians or Indians – it was simply due to the fact that Europeans were the ones who had introduced the cinema into Africa (see De Turegano 2003, 2004). Once the case for African writing traditions in the cinema is made, and methodological dialogue set in motion within the tryptic offered here, in line with the tryptic's

conditions (for being put forward) in part one of this chapter, manifestations of short-sightedness, such as Gardies's and Haffner's, can even be picked up by the Anteriorists. It follows that Exteriorists seem to be searching obsessively for an African Other (Other to whom and for whom? I would ask). That they recognise the complex problems African filmmaking is faced with does not stop Exteriorists from attributing the same problems to Africans' failure in fully assimilating the medium and, essentially, they view the development of African filmmaking as a European achievement.

On the other hand, Exteriors films – that is, films about Africa and set in Africa, or not, made by non-Africans – should be approached differently, for they seem to (only) undermine the Anteriors and Interiors approaches. And yet, that is precisely why Exteriors' films must be part of filmic histories of Africa, even when they address very controversial issues like slavery or genocide. For example, *Shake Hands with the Devil: The Journey of Roméo Dallaire* (2004) and *Shooting Dogs* (2005) expose Western racism, dubious Chinese ethics, and their shared responsibility with African extremists in butchering over 800 000 Rwandans. To expect more from Exteriors' films is to forget that, as per Asante's definition of culture used in this chapter, their filmmakers' invention of Africa is as cultural as that of the Anteriorists and Interiorists: it should be engaged with the same critical yardstick.

Conclusion: Open-ended pro-vocations

Many Film Studies sub-disciplines – from festivals and film schools to the digital and the film industry – have been omitted from this chapter. So too have been seminal filmmakers like the god/father of African cinema, Ousmane Sembène. The point is: inclusion/exclusion is up to whoever elects to work with the tools and processes offered above and, regarding Marxist Sembène, my current re-assessment of what his work (form/at, and contents) might mean for Senegal and Africa is showing him as an obstacle to reframing modernity; suffice it to say here that Marxism and period-piece filmmaking can be a damaging combination in African contexts.[22]

However, if one thinks multicentrically about Europe's extremely limited influence in Africa, if one avoids national messianism and moves *à contretemps*, one will manage to both appreciate the Africans opening to organic modernity and relate critical packages to teaching methods to thinking strategies to theoretical-practical frameworks. Please note: those lying comfortably in a de-colonial(ising) canon – with pitfalls like navel-gazing, hero or theory

22 See also pp. 63–89 of my *Prothèses poussiéreuses: 'Le Continent' au cinema* (2019), fictional book on African and other cinemas, featuring Sembène and other key cineastes of twentieth-century cinemas.

worshipping, dogmatic debating or national messianism – need to catch up with parts of Africa (as idea and place) which might have moved on from trying to reinvent the wheel. Differently stated, Film Studies in Africa should be helping its students grasp how the magical-realist *Soul Boy* (2010) might be modern, or how *Hyènes* (1992) is a-temporal and rings true today. This is because, ultimately, teaching film in Africa needs constant intersections between epistemology, methodology and method, but also an understanding that all discursive processes are inscribed within (the pressure of) ideological connections and conditions.

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05

Movements of War: Film as Apparatus of Inscription and Transmission

Bettina Malcomess

> As the landscape of war became cinematic, … only the lens-shutter could capture the film of events, the fleeting shape of the front line, the sequences of gradual disintegration. (Virilio 1989, 70)

> Exactly as later figures like Fanon would have anticipated, the militaristic, spectacular culture of empire and colony is dominated by violence. The inevitable questions of sovereignty and deep statecraft aside, the backdrop of warfare was essential in highlighting the moral legitimacy of imperial rule. (Gilroy 2011)

Paul Gilroy's essay, which opens the anthology *Film and the End of Empire*, makes an explicit connection between war and the colonial project. I would like to extend Gilroy's assertion to investigate the specificity of this 'militaristic, spectacular culture of empire and colony' through the role played by film in the documentation and circulation of still and moving images of the South African War. I draw attention to gestures of inscription, transmission and circulation that 'map' the camera's relation to a geographical territory within two films from the South African War period and an amateur educational film, titled *K.A.R. Signals: A Film of Routine in Remote Places*, made in the 1930s. I propose that these films from disparate moments within the framework of the British Empire make visible the entanglement of the colonial spatial and temporal imagination with a military imagination as it is expressed in the very form of moving images in

the context of conflict (Gilroy 2011). I extend Gilroy's notion of war as backdrop to consider the deeper entanglement of both professional and amateur colonial filmmaking with an emerging proto-filmic military imagination in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries via the work of Paul Virilio (1989) in his suggestive and poetic *War and Cinema: The Logistics of Perception*.

My argument can be situated in relation to film historian Priya Jaikumar's (2011) call for a 'spatial turn' in colonial film historiography. Jaikumar argues for the need for a return to the colonial film archive to 'comprehend and disrupt the logics of seeing, being and thinking that make such films possible in their own time'. She asserts that this requires asking 'fundamentally spatial questions' about the 'where, why and how we situate/d colonial objects, people, places then and now' (2011, 167). Jaikumar's work, which addresses colonial and postcolonial film in India, proves instructive for this study, which is focused on moving images and films produced within British Empire territories on the African continent that are circulated to both British and African audiences. Jaikumar describes watching one of the shorts of Gaumont-British Instructional's Geographical film series, the 'Indian Town Studies', in which she experiences an affective encounter with a diversity of faces of women and men pictured on screen. She proposes: 'the present demands a more rigorous turn to film qua film so that we can reclaim the affectual distinctions between geographical films as disciplinary objects of their period, against the cinematic event that is repeatable, renewable (though always placed) encounter between spectators and texts' (Jaikumar 2011, 177). This chapter is an attempt to re-situate a series of encounters with the colonial film archive and the remaining actuality films of the South African War housed within the British Film Institute (BFI), the South African National Film Archive and the Colonial Film website as cinematic events open to a series of 're-inscriptions'.

The methodology is to focus less on chronological placement of the films within a historical context, although this is addressed. My intention is to produce a close reading of film form in order to trace out the locus of a shifting colonial spatial and temporal imagination.

Filmic inscription, colonial movement and the 'cinematic' re-imagination of war: Methodological approaches

The three films to be discussed are *K.A.R. Signals: A Film of Routine in Remote Places* (1936) and two South African War films, *Repairing the Broken Bridge at Frere* (1899) and *Rifle Hill Signal Station near Frere Camp* (1899), both shot by W.K.L. Dickson for British Mutoscope and Biograph. *K.A.R. Signals* forms part of the wave of official and unofficial colonial film production of the 1930s. The others are classified in the catalogues of distribution companies as animated photographs, now referred to as actuality films, and were shot during the South

African War. While these films are quite far apart temporally, and contextually, it seems productive to attempt to read them within the frame of a constellation of filmic movement, the role of moving images in war and the mapping of colonial territory.

Here the question at the centre of the following analysis is how moving image produces the territory both within and outside of the frame as a potential field of action framed by the imaginary of war. Even when no actual military combat or violence is seen within the frame, a set of symbolic codes invokes tropes of war: control, exception and strategy. Thus, a kind of symbolic violence is enacted through the very movement within the frame and of the camera across an imaginary territory.

The analysis to follow focuses on how camera movement as well as movement within the frame produce a specific relationship between a filmic gaze and an implied off-screen space. For the question of off-screen space, I draw on the work of Christopher Pinney (1992) on the histories of photography versus film in visual anthropology, and set this in relation to Christian Metz's essay, 'Photography and Fetish' (1985). Pinney's and Metz's work forms the basis for a discussion of photographic stillness and filmic movement. I also draw on the work of several authors in the volumes *Empire and Film* (2011) and *Film and the End of Empire (2011)*, edited by Lee Grieveson and Colin MacCabe, particularly Ravi Vasudevan's 'Official and Amateur: Exploring Information Film in India, 1920s–40s'; Martin Stollery's 'The Last Roll of the Dice: Morning, Noon and Night, Empire and the Historiography of the Crown Film Unit', and Priya Jaikumar's 'An "Accurate Imagination": Place, Map and Archive as Spatial Objects of Film History'.

This double-volume series forms part of the Colonial Film Archive project, which digitised a large portion of the British colonial films housed at three institutions: the BFI, Imperial War Museum and the Empire Commonwealth Museum. For the purposes of this chapter, I reviewed several films from the Colonial Film Database; those 16mm and 35mm films not available online were watched on a Steenbeck viewing machine at the BFI in London. Some viewing of compilation films of the South African War took place at the National Film Archive in Pretoria.

K.A.R. Signals *and the Geographical Series*

K.A.R. Signals forms part of the Colonial Film Archive and is available in digital format online, with an original copy housed at the Imperial War Museum. The film depicts the 'Signals Section – Northern Brigade' of the King's African Rifles (K.A.R.) on the Kenya–Sudan frontier. Silent and shot on 16mm by amateur filmmaker, Robert Kingston-Davies, it was intended as an educational film for a British audience and formed part of a British educational film series for classroom use accompanied by notes for teaching, although it appears the film did circulate in some form of general release.

The film received commentary from the Geography Committee at the BFI, that gave advice on the final edit and sanctioned the film's value for a broader British audience. It was favourably reviewed by the *Monthly Film Bulletin* as an 'excellent film' which 'grips the attention and impresses on the mind some vivid pictures of the landscape and environment' (Rice 2008). Kingston-Davies had originally proposed the film to the Colonial Office, titling his proposition 'Scheme of an Experimental Trip for the Production of 16mm'. Two things are striking here: that the film edit was passed through the BFI Geography Committee and that it claimed status as 'experimental' (Rice 2008). More research needs to be done into the collections housed at the BFI on the Geography Committee records for *K.A.R. Signals* and Kingston-Davies; for now, my analysis focuses on the film form.

Kingston-Davies's film must be read as an amateur film. Literally out of place in the development of the history of documentary and avant-garde film, it lacks the sophistication of films by directors working within the Empire Marketing Board or the General Post Office Film Unit, such as Basil Wright or John Grierson. Kingston-Davies's use of titling slides between frames in the film's introductory sequence clumsily 'wipes' the printed text of the inter-titles by hand. This adds an amateur, home-made quality to the film, as does Kingston-Davies's rather incoherent editing style within certain sequences in the film. Added to this are the filmmaker's use of hand-drawn maps and cut-out arrows to indicate the film's geographical location. The maps do not show much topographical detail, with just the barest of cadastral markings showing national borders.

Comparison between *K.A.R. Signals* with Jaikumar's (2011) study of the Geographical series of Gaumont-British Instructional Films, shows how the film follows a set of conventions that construct what she calls an 'accurate imagination' in the service of producing imperial geographical knowledge. The film's use of animation with actuality footage, 'where animation refers to cartographic drawings and moving symbols on maps' (Jaikumar 2011, 168), was a standard convention. The film's hybrid approach brought together two registers that were at odds with one another: cinematic image and diagrammatic map. It was this contradiction that structured what Jaikumar calls the rational imagination of remote places and peoples.

Shot in India and Africa, the Geographical series were 'anti-adventure colonial films that suppressed visual tropes of danger, excitement, the sublime and the picturesque', assuming 'a spectator who was both appreciative and evaluative' (Jaikumar 2011, 176). Jaikumar further relates this project of imagination to the use of the films in British school education, where students were taught to construct maps from photographs of their own or more remote neighbourhoods. This ability to 'imagine', 'abstract' and reassemble through montage produces, for Jaikumar, 'the anatomy of a rational imagination' able to produce and consume an image of empire as a geographical field projected outwards.

Kingston-Davies's film 'experiment', with its awkward inter-titles and maps, is thus fully within the conventions of the geographical genre described by Jaikumar. Kingston-Davies is, however, also representative of the amateur filmmaker as the authorial figure of early film, a mobile white masculinity that, while it speaks to the explorer figure of early colonialism, sees its service to empire in the interests of duty and research rather than adventure. How does the film perform this production of imperial geographical knowledge?

The motivation for making the film is strongly linked to Kingston-Davies's own movement and development as a filmmaker – it is an 'experimental trip' aimed at testing out the possibilities of producing 16mm film. It is this 'movement' of the camera and thus the filmmaker along the border of Sudan and Kenya that I will argue is, in fact, at the root of the film's 16mm form as experiment.

Though Kingston-Davies himself is never present within the frame, except possibly in the metonymic movement of the inter-titles by his hand, his camera charts a region of East Africa that is described as 'the thinly peopled Northern Frontier District … undeveloped, barren, remote'. One reviewer notes that 'although geography is incidental' in the film, its vivid pictures of landscape and environment' are 'enhanced by the movement and human interest in the film' (*Monthly Film Bulletin* 1937, 230). Indeed, one of the most strikingly contemporary sequences in the film, which is the only instance of mobile camera



Figure 5.1. Map shown in *K.A.R. Signals: A Film of Routine in Remote Places*, 1936 (hereafter *K.A.R. Signals*). Source: Imperial War Museum; screen shot from: http://www.colonialfilm.org.uk/

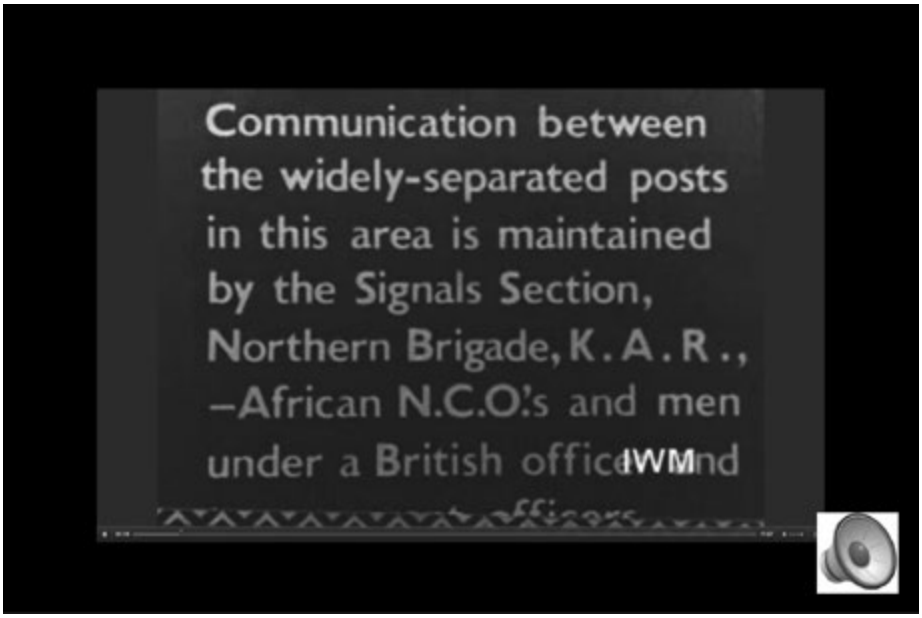


Figure 5.2. Clip of Signals Section, K.A.R. *Signals*. Source: Imperial War Museum; screen shot from: http://www.colonialfilm.org.uk/

work in the form of a travelling shot, is of a moving vehicle crossing the 'empty' landscape at some speed, with the camera placed on a trailing vehicle.
This highly mobile sequence seems at first glance to contrast with the film's awkwardly staged narrative sections, where the camera remains largely stationary, with movement limited to panning. The latter largely involve local African men, dressed in what appear to be traditional military regalia; they perform reconnaissance missions into the landscape and operate heliograph signalling stations. The heliograph is an apparatus that uses mirrors to emit a physical light signal across a radius of 15km, largely used for military communication in the nineteenth century. Shots of members of the British military giving orders, and in one sequence bathing in a small dam, are interspersed with apparently disconnected shots of labouring, waiting and walking African soldiers.

But if the mapping of landscape derives in the film's single long travelling shot from the camera's movement across space, the implication of a possible mobility is suggested in these narrative sequences by the use of the heliograph as a technology of mapping. The military and colonial use of heliograph signalling forms the central narrative thread within the film, connecting the disparate sections of the montage and the landscape through which the camera 'eye'

moves us. However, there are several other filmic devices that produce the sense that the camera, and hence the film, navigates a landscape. The film opens with a montage of maps, starting off as simply cartographic, with hand-made labels added to different regions, followed by a series of arrows. All of this is done in the same crude fashion as the inter-titles. The map sequence is followed by a title explaining how these 'widely-separated posts' are connected by the 'Signals Section of the Northern Brigade, K.A.R.'.

The following sequence opens with a pan across an essentially empty plain where the laying of communication lines is visible, followed by shots of the erection of newer telegraphic communication posts, alternated with shots of processes of labour by local Africans employed or enlisted for this work. The laying of the telegraph communication lines suggests that the film serves as a document of the modernisation of infrastructure, with telegraphic communication a theme in many empire films. Thus, communication produced by wireless and heliographic signalling enables the production of the singular spatial field which the film navigates for us, and the film narrative itself hinges on a montage of vehicular and human movements between heliograph signalling stations.



Figure 5.3. Landscape framed by signalling station, *K.A.R. Signals*. Source: Imperial War Museum; screen shot from: http://www.colonialfilm.org.uk/

Interestingly, however, the film never positions us within any kind of specific national territory. We, the viewers, are instead placed within a borderless, stateless field in which movement and labour are organised around this massive communication project. In some shots, the landscape is framed by the new telegraphic signalling station apparatus, the poles and wires of which are shot in an aesthetic reminiscent of Russian Constructivist photography, often also focused on industrial infrastructures as social documents. These lines thus organise our perception of the visual field in which both landscape and a stateless, dislocated African labour and military force are placed.[1]



Figure 5.4. Borderless, stateless visual field, *K.A.R. Signals*. Source: Imperial War Museum; screen shot from: http://www.colonialfilm.org.uk/

1 Thelma Gutsche, Ian Christie, Tom Gunning and Tom Rice provide accounts of exhibition and circulation of early film by travelling showmen and theatre troupes, as well as accounts of amateur filmmakers.

Inscription and transmission

If we now enquire further into the particular nature of the heliograph as one form of communication technology employed by the Signals Section, along with more modern wireless technologies, we see more clearly how those technologies function, both as means of inscription of African territories within a colonial imaginary of space and time, and of transmission and communication between the disparate *territoires* of empire. Invented in the early nineteenth century, the heliograph is an apparatus that produces a physical light signal using a gridded mirror that can be decoded and as such read across relatively large distances (almost a manual version of Morse code that employs natural light).

Interestingly, the heliograph is also the name given to the earliest device capable of producing a photographic image, and was indeed the original process used by Niépce to produce the first photographic image on a glass plate negative. Striking here is the strangely filmic nature of the heliograph, which is not unlike the camera apparatus, whose operation also depends on a reflected light signal from a mirror, a function unchanged in the mechanism of digital single reflex cameras. Like film technology, the heliograph is a device both of inscription (writing) and transmission in the sense outlined by Fatimah Tobing Rony.



Figure 5.5. Framing of African subjects and the heliograph 1, *K.A.R. Signals*. Source: Imperial War Museum, screen shot from: http://www.colonialfilm.org.uk/



Figure 5.6. Framing of African subjects and the heliograph 2, *K.A.R. Signals*. Source: Imperial War Museum; screen shot from: http://www.colonialfilm.org.uk/

Tobing Rony (1996) discusses inscription in the context of the anthropological chronophotography of Felix Regnault, a trained physician turned amateur ethnographer working in the 1880s. She sees chronophotography as an attempted form of scientific inscription, understood as a form of evidence, as the fact of what is seen recorded by the neutral apparatus or device that *writes* it.

For Regnault 'film was the true scientific inscription'; able to contain an 'emanation of the referent', it is 'by its nature indexical' (Tobing Rony 1996, 40). For the purposes of this chapter, it is important to note the uses of filmic and proto-filmic technologies like the chronophotographic camera as devices used for the scientific inscription of human and other movement. Thus, the African subjects within the frame of *K.A.R. Signals* are inscribed within a filmic gaze as labouring subjects responsible for the building and operation of the communication infrastructures of the empire. It is these subjects who carry out the heliographic signalling shown within the film. Thus, a double act of transmission and inscription of the landscape, and of the black subjects within the frame of the camera, takes place within the film's temporal ordering of movement.

Off-screen space as part object

A similar double act of inscription and transmission is visible within the two South African War films I discuss below, and I turn now to the work of visual anthropologist, Christopher Pinney, and film- theorist Christian Metz to investigate the relation between movement in *K.A.R. Signals* and these earlier titles. Kingston-Davies's camera movement follows the lines of wireless and heliographic communication in the landscape. As in other colonial films of the twentieth century, an equivalence is set up between filmic kinesis and the building of railway lines as means of transmission and communication within and between territories.[2]

There are several sequences in *K.A.R. Signals* that register forms of filmic movement and stillness and I argue gesture to an off-frame space. The first sequence opens with a shot of a landscape from the vantage point of a hill, what is called 'a commanding position'. Two figures enter the frame from the right, first an African man in military uniform, followed by a British man in a tan uniform. The camera follows them into position on the hill, framing them to the right, while the landscape fills the rest of the frame. The African soldier points to the left, gesturing towards the visible landscape but also further, into the off-screen space. In rather a camp fashion, the khaki-clad English soldier mimics his pointing, there is some exchange of words and more pointing, followed by the white man gazing into the landscape through binoculars. It is finally an order and gesture from the latter that initiates the movement of the pair off-screen, exiting the frame diagonally to the left, leaving the landscape once again 'empty'. The over-staged narrative and formal structuring of this short sequence forms the model for several similar sequences that dramatise looking and movement within the landscape, by both African and British figures in the employ of the Signals Section.

In his chapter, 'The Lexical Spaces of Eye-Spy', Christopher Pinney (1992) draws on Christian Metz's essay (1985) 'Photography and Fetish' to formulate a critique of certain uses of film in contemporary visual anthropology. His argument hinges around differing notions of 'stillness' and 'movement' within photographic versus filmic registers. He argues for a return to photographic stillness to counter what he calls the 'complete mastery' of the supposed 'narrative coherence of film'. He turns here to a description by late nineteenth-century writer, Oliver Wendell Holmes of the stereoscopic image of a landscape as a 'sun sculpture' as against the 'flat carte-de-visites', which Holmes describes as 'sun pictures'.

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2 The camera's fetishisation of the movement of trains and telecommunication technologies from its very inception is well known within writing on early cinema (see Gunning 1990). This suggests an almost indexical relationship to tropes of modernity and global empire trade and is echoed in more formally interesting films such as Basil Wright's sound and image montage of telegraphic cables in *Song of Ceylon* (1934).



Figure 5.7. Gesturing to the off-screen space, *K.A.R. Signals*. Source: Imperial War Museum; screen shot from: http://www.colonialfilm.org.uk/

For Pinney, the stereoscope encodes the landscape with depth, and thus the potential for movement or at least the analogue of movement by the suggestion that the eye travels across or within the illusory depth of the visual field. The point made here around stillness and implied depth will be further explored in relation to staged and documentary stereoscopic images of the South African War, which were in circulation along with films. For Jonathan Crary (1992), stereoscopic viewing is a medium that produces a specific observational mode and viewing subjectivity in the nineteenth century, which anticipates, more than photography, a filmic sensibility in its awareness that depth in the image is created through the unification of a double image into a single image.

Pinney's (1992) distinction between registers of stillness and movement, as well as his discussion of movement through time as enabled by the extension of space that occurs in stereoscopy, is useful in order to think through the affect of filmic movement in the films I am discussing. For Pinney, the play between stillness and movement within film is connected to Mulvey's (2006) notion of visual pleasure, where both camera and character movement are heroic, active, masculine, and the stillness of that which is gazed at or captured in the masculinity of the 'look' is feminised, passive, acted upon. While I am cautious about the schematisation of stillness and movement here, I see some resonance



Figure 5.8. 'Yorkshires signaling … so bravely held after their unit had fallen'. Source: A stereographic card from the Underwood and Underwood stereographic set, 1900. This image is from the author's personal collection.

with the stillness of the landscape and the camera's gaze on the labouring colonised subject in *K.A.R. Signals* as producing potential registers of visual pleasure for a British colonial audience. However, I think a more interesting reading is possibly available through returning to Christian Metz's more directly psychoanalytic reading of film. Metz complicates the medium's relationship to fetish via an emphasis on off-screen space and time as partial objects. I quote at length:

> Film is much more difficult to characterise as a fetish. It is too big, it lasts too long, and it addresses too many sensorial channels at the same time to offer a credible unconscious equivalent of the lacking part-object. It does contain many potential part-objects (the different shots, the sounds, and so forth), but each of them disappears quickly after a moment of presence, whereas a fetish has to be kept, mastered, held, like the photograph in the pocket. Film however … endlessly mimes the primal displacement between seen absence and the presence nearby. Thanks to the principle of a moving cutting off, thanks to the changes of framing … cinema literally plays with the terror and pleasure of fetishism, with its combination of desire and fear. (1985, 87)

For Metz, it is the suggestion of the off-screen space that marks this play between absence and presence, between desire and terror. In film the off-screen space is substantial, it is the implied 'castration' of the look, a 'stopping', a cutting off

of perception, but also a suggestion of potential entry into the unseen, what cannot be seen. I would like to suggest that a more complex, and perhaps more violent, constellation of colonial desire, fear and promise is held by the potential in the moving image and the stereoscope via the suggestion of what Metz calls off-frame space and time.

Camera movement and camera stillness in two South African War actuality films

Let me now develop this idea in a brief initial sketch of an analysis of two South African War films, and finally a return to *K.A.R. Signals*. My reference is to the actuality films of the South African War, as distinct from fictional fake films produced by Edison and other production companies in the period between 1899–1903. The former are short fragments of silver nitrate film shot in the field, normally unedited and of varying lengths, without explicit narrative structure but within the conventions of early cinema.

Billed in theatrical programmes at the time as animated photographs, they were shown on reels that included several standard features, possibly including some of the original Lumière films, and films of city life, such as a ride on a tram. These bills often included theatrical performances and screenings might on occasion be accompanied by the oration of a lecturer.[3] What they encompass is simply a scene (in its double sense, as what is in view and what is seen), and the films are formally in line with actuality films shot in the period from 1896–1903, essentially documents staging an encounter between viewer and the scene/seen.

Thus, already certain conventions of early film form define these fragments shot in the field of war. Largely shot by self-taught cameramen, they are examples of amateur and experimental early film; hence the resonances between the amateur colonial film, *K.A.R. Signals*, and these early war documents shot within an essentially colonial theatre of war. It is also important to situate the South African War films within the period referred to by Tom Gunning (1990, 56) as the 'cinema of attractions'. This period of actuality films begins with the ceaseless documentation of modern life, especially defined by movement: of crowds, of trams through cities and landscapes. Gunning notes that the attraction was within the affective registers of the image seen, both magical and 'stimulating an unhealthy nervousness', in the very speed at which images

3 Questions of representation of the body and the relationship between African and European subjects in the frame still need to be addressed. In other writing I explore this further by looking at movement and gesture in early anthropological and ethnographic film, centred around Tobing Rony's analysis of 'inscription' that begins with Regnault's ethnographic chronophotographs and Assenka Oksiloff's (2001) *Picturing the Primitive: Visual Culture, Ethnography and Early German Cinema.*

moved across the field of view. Early cinema audiences are also often described as being literally moved by the images, with descriptions of audiences running away from approaching trains, or moving closer to touch, even penetrate the projected image.[4]

A similar fascination with movement is evident in the *Frere Camp Films (1899)*. *Repairing the Broken Bridge at Frere Camp* shows a massive timber beam being carried by a group of African men across the field of the frame. The men move diagonally across the frame and are positioned in the lower left-hand portion. As they move out of the frame, it becomes visible that they are moving through shallow water. In the background is visible the mangled ironwork of the bridge, which appears to have been dynamited or blown up by cannon fire. The landscape in the background is framed by the remains of the bridge structure. In the mid-ground another diagonal line is formed by a line of men, British and African, who observe the process of the carrying of the beam. Some men move along this line of observers, with the movement of the beam. The camera remains still throughout the movement of the beam off-frame; following this, the camera pans right, passing across the line of observers and coming to rest on the concrete section of the bridge.

Two figures are striking in the scene/seen. The first is a centrally framed man, African, who stares or gazes directly at the camera as the beam crosses the filmic space. The second is a white, I assume British, man who enters the frame towards the end of the panning shot. This second man also engages his gaze directly at the camera. The panning shot functions as an in-camera cut from the still shot of the beam crossing the space of the frame; panning right metaphorically returns our gaze to the place from which the beam emerged prior to the time of the film. This off-frame space from which the beam and the men carrying it emerged, is unseen and implied until the camera movement right reveals it.

What is the effect of these plays between the stillness of observers, and the movements of the beam and bodies that hold it, and finally of the pan to the right at the end of the sequence? The second film in this series, in which no camera movement takes place, proves instructive for how to read the movements of the first film. In the *Rifle Hill Signal Station near Frere Camp* (1899) a still camera

4 Film historian Ian Christie traces a recurrence of what he calls the departure/arrival genre in early colonial cinema, within the period of the Cinema of Attractions. It includes many South African War films. A formal convention is set up where movement across the filmic space is by a diagonal movement towards the camera, as in the Lumières' film *Workers Leaving a Factory*. Christie locates several colonial and British national figures, for example, Lord Kitchener making a triumphal return to London from a successful military campaign in Sudan in *The Sidars' Reception at the Guildhall*. Christie proposes that this popular genre 'played a significant part in communicating the experience of empire' (Christie 2011, 22).



Figure 5.9. Still from *Repairing the Broken Bridge at Frere*, 1899, shot by WKL Dickson, British Mutoscope and Biograph. Source: South African National Film Archive, Pretoria.

shot describes a battalion stationed at the top of a *koppie* (small hill). A line of riflemen form a semi-diagonal from the foreground to the background of the frame; the signaller is placed on the left-hand corner in the foreground, furiously waving a flag throughout. A centrally placed leader figure, distinguished by his helmet, looks to the right into the landscape off-frame with a viewing device, a set of binoculars. To his left and a little to the foreground a man is sitting writing in a notebook. The riflemen occasionally cock and seem to point their guns into the off-screen space in the same direction as the gaze of the captain.

The film, while not fictional, is certainly more staged than the first, suggested by the careful positioning of all the 'characters' and the self-awareness of the riflemen and the man with the notebook, who looks up and smiles, even laughs self-consciously at the camera as if discussing its presence with a fellow soldier whom we do not see. The continuous motion of the signaller also seems staged, performed somewhat hysterically for the entire duration of the shot. All in the field of the frame seem occupied with the ordinary actions and labours of warfare, all anticipate the potential arrival of combat from a space and time off-frame.

Systems of fragments: Re-inscription | re-transmission

What emerges in these two South African War films, shot in the context of war, is a play between what is inscribed within the field of the frame and an implied

off-frame space and time. This play produces the desire and potential for movement by the camera, and by proxy the viewer, as a means to master an implied but absent territory. This returns to Metz's and Pinney's point around the play between photographic stillness and filmic movement, where the latter implies an object that can be held, like the photograph: a view contained and held. The gesturing to an off-screen space and time in the moment of the camera's stillness, or the cut at the moment of its potential motion, imply a territory outside of the frame that can be 'held' in this same way. At the same time, the fragmentary nature of these films and their frustratingly short duration suggest an elusive and illusionary relationship between the camera and a territory that includes the landscape, but also the objects and bodies in the frame: the labouring African bodies that produce the infrastructures not only of war but also for the geographical territory of empire trade.[5]

There are useful connections to be made here to the framing of the landscape in *K.A.R. Signals* by telegraphic lines and poles. In that film, the camera and the heliograph share a field of inscription and transmission within the frame. The comparison between the three films also raises a further question, which is that of the effect generated in the colonial audience by its relation to the part-object of the uninscribed territory suggested by the camera's framing of the off-frame landscape. In the moment of the films' projection, the off-frame space within the field of war, on the one hand, and of colonial occupation, on the other, is potentially mastered, possessed, communicated and transmitted by the signal of the projected film, itself a mobile unit.

However, it is also always and only an absence, like the borderless, unbounded territory of Kingston-Davies's fragmentary film, disorientating and incomplete. In the South African War films, the off-frame space and time to some extent exists as threat, as void, cut off suddenly as the film stops rolling, incommunicable, untransferable. It is an attachment to this unmasterable territory of the off-frame space and time that perhaps sustains the viewer's attention, and perverse enjoyment.

K.A.R. Signals, *Rifle Hill Signal Station near Frere Camp* and *Repairing the Broken Bridge at Frere* all function to unite a series of dislocated spaces, both visible in-frame and implied off-frame. Inherent in their inscriptions of colonial space and the field of battle is an imaginary of empire as a singular territory that emerges despite the fragmentation of spaces.

5 Grieveson addresses the enmeshment of colonial films with the shifting economic policies of Britain in relation to the commonwealth, seen after World War I as a market rather than a territory of conquest.

War's recording surface

My final point returns to the entanglement of cinematic form with war, and Gilroy's (2011) description of 'war as backdrop' to the colonial project. When Virilio (1989) argues that 'the landscape of war became cinematic', I understand him to mean that it becomes filmable, and thus narratable in fragments that only in their reassembly, both between shots and within shots via camera movement, produce a singular space as 'effect'. Virilio refers to the blindness of troops in the battlefield due to the long range of automated artillery, and thus the role of film and aerial photography in constructing the singular space of the battlefield. Virilio notes that this is a reversal of the work of Muybridge and Marey's movement studies in the nineteenth century as it aims not to break down but 'to reconstitute the fracture lines of the trenches, to fix the infinite fragmentation of a mined landscape, alive with endless potentialities' (Virilio 1989, 89).

Virilio's argument hinges on the mobility of the camera, attached to planes, often on the same apparatus and using the same mechanism as automatic weaponry. This mobility is also an aspect of mechanical kinesis: to shoot continuously and move across spaces no longer visible from a singular point of view. Essentially, Virilio makes no distinction between the mobile apparatus of the stills camera and the cinematographic camera, which is an oversight on his part. For Virilio, the war effort depended on the continuous transmission of images and information using telegraphic and wireless signalling between reconnaissance planes and ground staff who were using material to update the maps of a shifting landscape.

Virilio's writing largely concerns the two World Wars and a much more mobile set of camera technologies. Nonetheless, certain resonances are visible between the filmic inscription and transmission occurring in these spatially and temporally distant battlefields. In a passage concerning the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima during World War II, Virilio describes 'the blinding Hiroshima flash which literally photographed the shadow cast by beings and things so that every surface became war's recording surface' (Virilio 1989, 85). While the use of heliograph signalling across a 15–16km radius in a barren Orange Free State landscape in Southern Africa in 1899 feels far from this war of light and surreal projection, there is the same attempt to produce the sense of a space both inscribable and ordered by a military and a colonial gaze.

I argue that we can make a connection between these military acts of inscription and transmission and the overtly staged flag signalling of the white British soldiers stationed on the hill at Frere camp, and the equally over-acted gestures of the African heliograph signallers in Kingston-Davies's *K.A.R. Signals*. This is, to borrow again from Virilio (1989, 89), an attempt to produce a space 'alive with endless potentialities' and thus endlessly inscribable within a transmittable military and colonial imaginary.

It is moreover not only these three films that generate a space ripe for war or colonial mastery through their stitching together of disaggregated space. Martin Stollery (2011) has discussed in similar vein a failed propaganda film produced during World War II, the unfinished 1943 Crown Film Unit production, *Morning, Noon and Night*, a feature-length documentary about the empire war effort. Stollery describes the film's focus on infrastructure across a variety of distant empire territories, with independent film crews producing footage to be compiled into the final work. While not part of my corpus, comparison with the film is interesting in its attempt to draw a picture of the 'people's war' across a vast range of spaces, structured in the genre of a day in the life of the empire, and explicitly drawing on several Soviet films, such as Dziga Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera,* as precedents. The failure of the film was due in large part to tensions throughout the empire, with growing calls for independence, but also due to the unmanageable scale of the production itself. Stollery notes that by the middle of 1943, it was 'proving difficult to hold the empire together even at the level of representation' (Stollery 2011, 49).

This impossibility of the completion of *Morning, Noon and Night* resonates with the impossibility of seeing the battlefield in the continuously shifting aggregate pictures produced by mobile photography and film during World War I, but also in the fragmentary nature of film documents of the South African War, and the disorientating spatial language of Kingston-Davies's amateur editing. Finally, it speaks to the only possible image of empire as an imaginary and shifting field compiled of indexical footage inscribed within a 'narrative of war as backdrop'.

Towards re-inscription (end notes)

I would like to end this chapter, which I see as a basis for further research, with a potential act of re-inscription, and re-transmission. I would like to return to the gazes of subjects in the films that disrupt the neutral point of view of the camera. First, there is the laughter of the British note-taker as he looks directly at the camera in the second war film, clearly performing an act of inscription that is fake. Second, there is the African man who stares directly at the camera, ignoring the movement of objects and bodies in the frame, refusing to watch what everyone else watches: the movement of the beam.

Tobing Rony (1996) discusses in this context the similar 'filming' by Regnault of African subjects at the Exposition Ethnographique de l'Afrique Occidentale (Ethnographic Exhibition of West Africa) of 1895. She notes that in the chronophotography of Regnault there is a young West African girl who 'appears to break the cinematic code' of ethnographic film by looking directly at the camera. Tobing Rony emphasises the 'chain of looks' in order to argue for a potential to see the subjects in the films as 'not just bodies' but as 'people who returned gazes' (Tobing Rony 1996, 24).



Figure 5.10. A direct gaze at the camera in *Repairing the Broken Bridge at Frere*, W.K.L. Dickson,1899. Source: South African National Film Archive, Pretoria.

I am curious here about how these looks mark potential disruptions in the colonial inscription and transmission of territories and subjects within these films. My conclusion is a provocation, and also a question about my own placement as a white South African researcher and artist in relation to these films. Can we situate our re-viewing of the colonial film archive (in its original analogue formats or digital translations) to open the space and time of the cinematic event to the potential for re-inscription and re-transmission of those subjectivities caught within the very violence of its movement?[6]

6 Sol Plaatje's mobile cinema can be seen as a direct counter-movement to the movements of mobile cinema units in the South African provinces, which reinforced the separation of rural and urban central to the policy of separate development. Plaatje's circulation of moving images within the rural areas can be seen as effectively undoing this separation.

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06

Reading Gestures in *De Voortrekkers*

Palesa Nomanzi Shongwe

The South African silent epic *De Voortrekkers: Die Winne Van 'n Nuwe Wêreld* (Gustav S. Preller and Harold M. Shaw 1916) mythologises the migration of Dutch settlers from the Cape Colony as a great exodus to escape the encroaching British Empire and reconstructs *iMpi yaseNcome*, or the Battle of Blood River (the River Ncome), from an Afrikaner perspective. Also known by its English title 'Winning a Continent', *De Voortrekkers* (the Dutch word for 'pioneers'), would often be screened in commemoration of what was later known within the Afrikaner nationalist idiom as the 'Day of the Covenant' or 'Dingaan's Day' to mark the Voortrekker triumph over the generals of the Zulu King Dingane on 16 December 1838 – a victory that heralded the foundation of the Boer Republic of Natalia and secured the passage of Dutch settlers further into the South African hinterland.

The story rests on the doctrine of Afrikaner manifest destiny and what Neil Parsons refers to as 'Afrikaner irrenditism' (Parsons 2013, 641). *De Voortrekkers* is said to have borrowed from D.W. Griffith's film *The Birth of a Nation* (1915), released only a year before, not only conventions of the epic historical melodrama, but also a nation-building discourse and the narrative presentation of Christian correctitude and moral innocence as the foundations of white identity (Gaines 2000).

Produced only six years after the uneasy formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910, *De Voortrekkers* is often framed as a good example of early South African nation-building film propaganda (Hees 2003; Masilela 1981; Parsons 2013; Saks 2011), made at a time when the fervent venture capitalism from Britain and America flooding Johannesburg in the early twentieth century espoused British liberal imperialism and Afrikaner nationalism. The film's

scenario attempts to disappear Anglo-Boer conflicts at the root of Afrikaner migration in the early nineteenth century and still at play by the early 1900s, finding instead a convenient third force in two fictional Portuguese traders whose perfidious interference precipitates Dingane's murder of Retief and his breach of an agreement between the two patriarchs – a compromise of Preller's initial version of the story, in which the two mischief makers were in fact English (Parsons 2013, 648).

Rewriting history

It furthers the reconciliatory efforts of the ambivalent Boer–British Union by literally re-writing recent history to cast Afrikaners as innocent defenders, the British as distant if not benevolent, Anglo–Boer tensions as merely ideological disagreements, Zulu responses to Afrikaner expansionism as primitive cruelty and the formation of an Afrikaner South Africa as a fulfilment of nothing less than a covenant with God (Saks 2011, 151–152).

For film scholars writing about early South African film, cinema's involvement in the work of nation-building throughout the twentieth century is to be understood not only as historicising and as myth-making, but as part of larger discourses that defined citizenship and inscribed national identities through visual language, iconographic representation and narrative.

This is to say that the work of a film such as *De Voortrekkers* was not only to represent a historical moment and to mythologise its meaning for the nation, but also to turn the representational act to the project of defining exactly *whom* this nation is made of. Ntongela Masilela writes in 'Issues in the South African Cinema': 'First, this particular form of imperialist transplantation of film culture, that is, film as the battle-ground of iconographic representations and interests, has had the effect until recently that film production in South Africa was never viewed as an artistic creative act, but rather, as a propaganda instrument against [one's perceived enemies]' (Masilela 1981, 3).

Indeed, for many scholars, the work of envisioning the South African nation in early cinema was also the work of inscribing national identities along primarily racialised lines. In her chapter, 'Cast in Celluloid: Imag(in)ing Identities in South African Cinema', Jacqueline Maingard argues for the study of South African cinema as a 'fertile space for investigations of representations of identity'. She discusses an 'interrelationship' between 'how South African identities are constructed in cinema' with 'the question of national identity':

> South Africa may be seen as a laboratory for the study of identity fraught as it has been (and is) by constructions of identities wrought in its colonial and apartheid histories. It follows then that South African

> cinema is a fertile space for investigations of representations of identity, for exploring how these might be bound into the histories of the country's development, for understanding how these histories determine cinematic representations and how cinematic representations interpret history. (2006, 84)

Like Masilela and others, Maingard is interested in reading the history of South African cinema, and by extension, the writing of South African history in cinema, in the context of the nation's racist colonial and apartheid past. For her, the question of the representation of identities is central to this reading, as it makes obvious how race and the racialisation of identity intersect processes of 'imaging' the nation in early South African cinema and how this imagination in turn shapes South African cinematic representations across the twentieth century.

When Maingard writes: 'Definitions of identity and especially of national identity are significantly determined by official or hegemonic positionings of those identities. In the South African apartheid context, race is primarily significant and it is conceptualizations of race and their concomitant representation in the cinema that I focus on here' (2006, 84), she is particularly interested in reading the cinematic constructions of black masculine identities 'against the backdrop of colonialism and apartheid' (2006, 83) in order to surface how these constructions were (and continue to be) central to the project of constructing South African nationhood.

She begins with *De Voortrekkers*, where some of the earliest representations of black figures in cinema are to be found, by stating: 'There is a great deal to be said about representations of masculinity in this context where Zulu men's bodies are represented en masse and near-naked, thus eroticised, whereas Boer men's bodies are represented more ordinarily, at times even as weak, puny, bandaged and wounded' (2006, 90). In her reading, the film uses 'opposition' to frame a 'barbaric and savage' black male identity (specifically characterised by the Zulu King Dingane) against a virtuous, vulnerable and God-fearing white male identity: 'Thus Dingane is represented as a barbarous, murderous villain who engages in infanticide, indeed commands the murder of his own son on a whim, while the Boers are endowed with righteousness' (2006, 85).

Reading for the black male body

Maingard is correct. There is a great deal to be said about the representation of black masculinity in *De Voortrekkers*. When she reads for the black male body within the film frame, she finds profoundly problematic representations, where identities have been 'fixed' (2006, 84), that is to say, reduced and cast, by a deeply racist colonial imaginary. The operation of an ideology that casts

whiteness and blackness as the oppositional relations of master versus slave, the hero versus the villain, the virtuous versus the vicious and the civilised versus the barbarous primitive is indeed writ large both within the film's narrative and by its visual rhetoric.

In 'A Tale of Two Nations: De Voortrekkers and Come See the Bioscope', Lucia Saks discusses two possible modalities of the historical film. In the first, the use of classical codes – costume, natural lighting, continuity editing and narrative linearity – 'encouraged the viewer to interpret such films as historical documents that showed events as they had "actually occurred"', producing what she cites as a 'referential realism' (2011, 143). She places *De Voortrekkers* within this first mode. Just the previous year, Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* had consolidated certain film techniques into what would form part of classical film language and demonstrated the grand effects of taking 'a fundamental national "moment" as the subject of [this] representational force' (Saks 2011, 142) on a national imagination.

De Voortrekkers borrows these classical codes in 1916 to make its own appeal to realism and, therefore, historical verity. As Saks states, this 'referential realism' gives rise to 'the appearance of truth: the truth of how things were independent of anyone's perspective, turning historical myth into the stuff of natural history, and human aspirations towards a reconfiguration of how things should be into the stuff of historical inevitability' (2011, 143). *De Voortrekkers* aligns its rhetoric with veracity through cinematic realism – a mode of cinema that, as Saks puts it, relies on the Bazinian conceptualisation of the medium as capable of reproducing 'the real' (2011, 142).

Foreclosing meaning?

When Maingard comes at *De Voortrekkers*, she does so with this premise of the ontology of the moving image – as a mode of representation of something real, where objects in reality become abstract reproductions of or signs that stand in for themselves on screen. The 'truth' of these reproductions is measured by how near or far they fall from the reality they represent. By her own admission, Maingard 'proposes some interconnections between image and identity in apparently simple ways' (2006, 85) – a necessary simplification in order to point to where an image is simply not true to the identity it claims to represent, and thus make obvious the ways in which colonial and racist ideologies distort representation in the service of the imagined 'nation'.

But if Maingard's ultimate problem with the way early cinema fixes the complexity of (South African) identities, which complexity she rather vaguely describes as 'a constant movement within the "in-between", and taking this notion further, within multiple layerings of in-betweennesses, which is a multi-plurality of identity' (2006, 85), her analysis can only give us a description of the problem, not its solution.

In this chapter my aim is go beyond where Maingard stops: at a description of the problematic politics of representations of black bodies as unindividuated vassals, overcome by the dominion of a colonialist logic. When considering the earliest appearances of black bodies as sites of identity on screen, it is true that we are troubled by the way these identities are represented. It was and remains important to be sensitive to this kind of trouble – to study, analyse and describe it. Yet, it begins to feel as if nothing more can be said of these images except regarding their intentional failure to represent, if not truthfully, then approximately, the complexity of black experience.

There is another dimension to our trouble, which arises from reading these images from the perspective of cinema as primarily a medium of representation. By standing on the innate presumption of the image as representation, we constantly and only read the image in ways that foreclose other possible extractions of meaning. I, like Maingard, am drawn to the black body on screen in *De Voortrekkers*. But where she, as other scholars after her, is concerned in her analysis with recentring black bodies marginalised by both the film frame and by the narratives produced within the hegemony that gave rise to the so-called South African nation film, I look for the black male body within the film frame because it is my contention that in being continually re-framed within discourses of representation, its meaning is over-determined by a perspective that reads it from the outside in – a perspective that describes (even if critically) this body in ways that only the film's own rhetoric permits.

Where Maingard reads the black body in *De Voortrekkers* in its compressed form – as a character or the horde, I wish to decompress it, to read how it *moves*, in order to reach for a meaning that happens beyond what the film's diegesis has predetermined. My critical questions are: What if we try to access what and how the cinematic body 'means', not from the outside in, but from the *inside out*? And how do we make this attempt? What happens when we include within the ambit of the discourse of representation the notion of self-presentation? What might this shift in our act of reading early filmic images allow us to retrieve beyond the problems of representation with respect to race, ethnos and nationhood? What if we read the black body not as a site of identity, as the film's own rhetoric would ask us to, but as the citation of something above and beyond the limits of that rhetoric? And might it be possible to catch a glimpse of this 'in-betweenness' or 'multi-plurality' lamented by Maingard as lost in cinema's compression of identity into representation?

While it is important to recognise the significance of discourse around the continually problematic impact of visual media on social and political identity and relations of power, I intend to explore a different direction. In my reading of black screen presence in *De Voortrekkers*, I hope to move beyond the now quite familiar discussion of how a totalising racist ideology within early South African film has left no room for resistance or agency on the part of black performers before

the screen and the black bodies they are said to represent. To do so, I borrow analytic strategies from performance studies, existential phenomenology, and Giorgio Agamben's thesis of gestural cinema. Before entering my reading of *De Voortrekkers*, I would like to first map the philosophical positioning from which I will carry it out.

The black cinematic body within a discourse of representation

I begin by elaborating on what I mean by the discourse of representation vis-à-vis the moving image. Then I explore the assumptions about the doctrine of the cinematic body within this discourse – a doctrine grounded on semiotic and psychoanalytical theories of cinema. I then identify within this doctrine what Akira Lippit in the chapter 'Digesture: Gesture and Inscription in Experimental Cinema' in *Migrations of Gesture* describes as 'a unique paradox [that] haunts the articulation of bodies in Cinema' (2008, 114), which in my understanding, frustrates a simplistic, realist discourse of the cinematic body – that is, one that takes the body on screen to be representative of the body in actuality. 'Representation' carries several connotations within discussions about cinema.

Shohat and Stam (2011, 2014) have suggested that the body, transfigured into cinematic form, is articulated as a sign, whose meaning is framed by and activated in the service of the film's discourse to represent ethos (character) and ethnos (peoples). As Shohat and Stam (2014, 182) write: 'The narrative and mimetic arts, to the extent that they represent ethos (character) and ethnos (peoples) are considered representative not only of the human figure but also of anthropomorphic vision.' If the film is an utterance, then this double value of the cinematic body, to stand in for other bodies (in terms of gender, race and ethnicity) as well as to personify abstract notions, helps articulate an anthropomorphic vision within that utterance.

This approach implies that the body in cinema – the kind of thing it is – makes its meaning semiotically. In fact, the discourse running through the writing of Maingard's (and other) critiques of cinematic racial representations, draws most heavily from semiotic and psychoanalytical theory. The black body on screen, articulated in the registers of these two approaches, is defined as a *signifier* within the larger mythology of white supremacy and as the object of its totalising racist *gaze*. Akira Lippit writes that a 'unique paradox haunts the articulation of [*all*] bodies in cinema … the body in cinema is also a lost body in some fundamental way, there only as a trace' (2008, 114). Citing Christian Metz, Lippit describes 'reality' in cinema as some 'primordial elsewhere' that at once seems present, breathing and intentional, and irretrievably absent (2008, 115).

Objects of this removed reality are 'imaginary signifiers' (2008, 116), generated by a medium that, in so effectively representing them, amplifies their absence.

And for Lippit, 'No signifier is more imaginary in cinema, more primordially elsewhere, perhaps, than that of the moving body' (2008, 116). The paradox of a body, at once 'moved and removed' before us, is an inescapable part of the 'peculiar phenomenology' of cinema; this paradox remains intact for as long as we keep grasping for a 'true body', channelled by this medium, from some perennial elsewhere. The discourse of representation around bodies (and black bodies) in cinema rests on this axiom (a proposition taken as self-evident) of the cinematic body – the black bodies on screen correspond to actual black bodies in the real world and represent them. But, we cannot speak of what we see on screen as representative of something in reality, without falling into Lippit's paradox.

Harvey Young writes in *Embodying Black Experience*: *Stillness, Critical Memory, and the Black Body*:

> When popular connotations of blackness are mapped across or internalized within black people, the result is the creation of the black body. This second body, an abstracted and imagined figure, shadows or doubles the real one … As an instantiation of a concept (blackness), the black body does not describe the actual appearance of a concept of any real person or group of people. (2010, 7)

Watching with careful attention the 'black' bodies on screen in early South African films, something disturbing threatens to overwhelm the spectator: the sensation of watching a body being erased by its own representation. This is because the spectator encounters the black body on screen as the projection of a projection. An intense instance of Jean Baudrillard's third-order simulacra occurs, where the 'black body', itself 'an abstracted and imagined figure', is now represented on screen to be read by the spectator, is removed by a series of abstractions from what actual body was ever there in reality.

The body is elusive whether we are talking about the real or the cinematic one. If the concept of 'black body' is a projection of ideas and constructs of meaning, projected onto actual bodies, which are then projected onto the screen, what and indeed who can we say is being represented? It is important to separate the multiple levels of projections that collate this 'body' into a representation. The body on screen cannot be taken as given, but rather as *becoming* – that is, we must shift away from reading the body on screen as a description of something, whose limits and contours precede it and are merely represented, but as an inscription, whose meaning is being written within and by the film. This shift makes particular questions not only possible but also necessary: We can now ask not only *what* is being inscribed and *how*, but, most importantly, *who* is doing the inscribing? And, when answering this question, we must look not just at the film's writer, director, costume and set designer and editor. We must also consider the performer.

The body moves itself, and is itself a medium that embodies, performs and projects meanings. The cinematic body is never limited to what the film's rhetoric describes, nor to what the spectator's gaze makes of this description. The cinematic body is performed, yet we very rarely look to performance when reading the black bodies on screen. This is what I endeavour to do in this chapter. I am reaching for what meaning can be gleaned from perceiving how the cinematic body means, not only cognitively or through the gaze as offered by psychoanalysis. Central to my attempt is the notion of the gesture – a unit of meaning making action that belongs to the moving body first before conferring that meaning unto the moving image. To get there, I would like to first unpack the concept of gestural cinema and of gesture within cinema.

Gesture and the cinematic body

Citing Siegfried Kracauer, Lippit speaks of the current that runs between physical and filmic realities as 'an endless continuum' between 'two registers of movement' (2008, 114). In the waking world, the movement of bodies through space and across unfolding time signals that they are alive, act with intention and are present. Through the combined effect of various systems – 'machinic, perceptual, phenomenal, psychological, photographic' (2008, 116) – cinema reproduces this movement on screen, transfixing our gaze with a 'more perfect' representation of persistent reality, and, when it comes to the body, of consistent *corpo*reality.

The presence of bodies on screen, therefore, is not of figures (objects), but of their movements (events) expressed in cinematic terms. Time (duration) governs the complex algebra that relates actual movement to cinematic movement. When we study 'the body' within a film frame – a unit of cinematic duration – we are studying a fragment of *movement* in time. In a narrowed sense, concerned only with the body's movement, the word 'gesture' connotes singular, small actions – as in the movement of hands – as well as larger (sequences of) actions performed with the entire body. In both senses, 'gesture' refers not just to motion but also to an expressive quality that 'indicates something about the mover's physical, emotional or intellectual being' (Levitt 2002, 25). In everyday encounters, the meanings of gestures, whether factual, cultural or political, are relative and circumstantial. Gestures themselves are temporally bound, arising out of and subsiding into a constant stream of spontaneous activity, as physical bodies navigate environments and enact intentions.

Since early rock art (some of which is thousands of years old) our plastic or visual arts reflected not just the impulse to capture reality in general, but specifically to cleave being and action out of the fugitive flow of 'real time', expressing (or revealing) its meaning by some more eternal mode. Gestures captured in painting, sculpture and photography are not just movements frozen

in time, but the meanings of those movements eternally reified and defined. Dance, ritual and theatre, can be defined as gestural arts, by the quality that their very medium is the gesturing body, whose expressions are preserved by repetition and re-enactment. Cinema has the potential to express gestures suspended in time, like the photograph, but also unfolding through time, like theatre. In her article, 'Image as Gesture: The Saint in Chrome Dioxide' (2002, 23–39), Deborah Levitt reiterates Agamben's theory of the emergence of cinema thus: 'The possibility of cinema's moving image is predicated on the di-vision of movement into its constituent parts' (2002, 25).

Retracing Agamben's steps, Levitt describes various proto-cinematic practices in the nineteenth century that focused the photographic gaze on the human body, out of an impulse to deconstruct, study and catalogue its movement, and particularly, its gestures: 'Marey's chronophotography, Muybridge's split-second photographs of human and animal motion, Charcot's photographic analyses of hysterical tics, de la Tourette's indexical charts of the footprints … Taylor's analyses of and prescriptions for efficient industrial production' (2002, 25).

Quoting Elsaesser, Levitt expresses the evolution of photographic practice, from the still image to motion, as 'the frenzy of the visible that became a frenzy of the di-visible'. In charting the movement of a body, dividing gestures into visible parts, these practices enabled the human eye to grasp what otherwise slips away in time. Reassembling the parts into a whole gave rise to the moving picture and to cinema. Gestures emerge out of real bodies, and are the force, rerendered in the movement of the motion picture, that creates the effect of 'presence' in cinematic bodies. They are what remain constant between the natural body and the cinematic, carried in the itinerant force of movement that crosses the border between actuality and its filmic representation.

It is movement that coalesces into the 'presence' of the body on screen. This is what sets cinema apart from other representational arts. This shift, from bodies to presence, places us in the province of ghosts and spirits where we may make use of a truer lexicon: cinema, like a medium, does not bring forth objects or bodies, but energies and affectations – in the sense that things only appear to be there, but they are not. What is in fact 'there' at all on screen are records of duration, perceived most obviously through movement. In the silent era, it is clearest that movement, articulated by bodies, by the camera and through the montage, is the primal force of cinema. This primacy, though never replaced, is somewhat eclipsed or obscured with the advent of sound.

I borrow from Leslie Stern in 'Ghosting: The Performance and Migration of Cinematic Gesture' in which she writes:

> it is a circuit of energy that passes through actants, gestures that mobilize bodies, affects that travel between bodies on the screen and bodies

> in the process of performance is a process of entertaining knowledge (in the way that an abandoned house entertains ghosts), of coming to know the past through mimetic enactment. The force of this knowledge, and its energetic circulation, is experienced somatically. (2008, 193)

Before our cognitive faculties grapple with its representation and our unconscious is troubled by the complex interplay of projections, cinema reaches the body first. However, to speak of the resonance of images at the level of the body does not begin at the study of the emotional impact of our perceptions. I am interested in perception itself and in what it might reveal to us to begin our reading of an image here: where bodies sitting in the cinema register the movement of bodies on screen. Given this mode of 'looking' or registering, not bodies per se, but their gestures, I now turn to the images of *De Voortrekkers*.

Reading gesture in *De Voortrekkers*

A focus on gesture enables us to speak of *degrees or frequencies* of gestures (being, as they are, units of expressive movement, rendered measurable by motion picture). It also enables us to speak of the *manner* of gesture – an energy expressed by the movement of a body that we read over and above the function of the gesture. This is looking at *how* (manner) one moves, not at just *why*. On screen, as in everyday life, we glean both types of information from the gestures of others. This is how we are able to identify consistent mannerisms in the movement of an individual body, across a range of disparate gestures.

Opening *De Voortrekkers*, a title card reads: 'Karel Landman of Cape Colony has sold his farm and prepares to join Retief's party in the national movement to the North'. In the following frame, there appears a bearded figure with a pensive expression and the posture of a man beset by worry. He is flanked by the figures of two women, presumably his wife and daughter, both wearing equally troubled expressions. They huddle together. Their early nineteenth-century costumes situate us around 1835, at the beginning of 'The Great Trek'. Two horsemen appear, right of frame, interrupting the intimate family moment. The horsemen dismount, remove their hats and extend their hands in greeting towards the solemn Landman.

In the distant background, their horses are led away from the frame by two figures, bare-chested, clad in loose-fitting trousers, with the anonymity of stagehands, their quiet presence easily missed.

For the briefest of moments, their appearance signals the existence of black bodies in the universe of this story, differentiated by the shade of their skin and manner of costume, from the figures that have occupied the frame thus far. Later, as the horsemen prepare to leave, one of the two figures reappears. This reappearance, although lingering longer, is marked by an unnatural stillness.



Figure 6.1. Screenshot from *De Voortrekkers*, 1916, (all subsequent images are from the same film). Note the horsemen in the background.



Figure 6.2. Showing horsemen in the background more clearly.

In silent film, an unmoving body is a voiceless body, an invisible body. The movements of the figures ushering horses off screen (Figure 6.1) are minimal, designed to be without excess, directed only at the function of wrangling the animals. They suggest languor, a lack of individual vitality. The invisibility of the figures (Figure 6.3) is reiterable as the indivisibility of their movements – their stillness within the frame. Surrounded by the quick gestures of the others, the two stable-hands are dead bodies, marked as separate not only by their skin or way of dress. They are almost entirely devoid of vitality, supposedly enervated by colonial conquest.

A messenger appears from afar, comes to deliver a letter to Landman (see Figures 6.5 and 6.6). The messenger is dark-skinned and similar to the



Figure 6.3. The horsemen prepare to leave. Note the figure in the background.



Figure 6.4. The unnatural stillness of the figure.

stable-hands in dress. Yet 'his' presence differs, in that, though also at the margin of the frame, it is marked by the movement of panting, the performance of the gesture of out-of-breathness. This small detail, whether as a result of actual (profilmic) running or part of the narrative's matrix of pretend, is a subtle deviation from the near-absolute stillness of the two stable-hands. While stillness means a kind of disappearance from the narrative, the power of gesturing beyond the mere functional movements of handing over a letter, brings this figure slightly closer to the notion of 'character' along the film's continuum of 'make-believe' – 'he' enjoys a little more vitality and feels more 'present'.

As explained above, the body represented on screen is only the affect of presence enforced by gesture (movement). The term 'presence' opens us to a useful double meaning: it directs us beyond 'representation' and also implies what is colloquially referred to as 'screen presence'. With the simple gesture of panting, the deliveryman enjoys a higher degree of presence as an almost-character (with a life, personality beyond mechanical function), but also the *performer* playing the deliveryman is slightly more visible to us – that is, he is expressive and he enjoys more 'screen presence'.

By speaking of screen presence, we do not do away with the implications of the representation but unravel a new thread that leads us to a performer, a decision-maker, a curator of gestures and calibrator of their style, quality and degree. Even as the screen presence of a performer, the agency of the performer, is in the service of the representation, it remains separate from it. This is why we can speak of the character of Jesse James, but also the performance of Brad Pitt as Jesse James. Something above or beyond the character lingers in all depictions of humans on screen.



Figure 6.5. Messenger is right of screen.



Figure 6.6. Messenger seen more clearly.

In the cinema of the twenty-first century it goes without saying that the star system relies on the persona of the actor to carry a certain style, a certain presence on screen, even across different characters and narratives. In early South African cinema, however, when it comes to African performers, this connection is less glib. While, by being named in the credits, the actors that play the Dutch, British and Portuguese characters are given as joint creators of the make-believe world before us, the representations of African characters seem to generate themselves. Performer and character are conflated. Discussions that only focus on representation reinforce this conflation. There is no actor; only the character is intelligible, driven by the impetus of the narrative.

How, then, do we reach for this something above or beyond the character? And what kind of thing is it? How do we know we are right about what we think we see? Especially in the case of a film such as *De Voortrekkers*, created more than a century ago, we cannot access enough information about the actors. How, then, do we try to meaningfully measure their agency over their performance? Beyond representation, which can be analysed and interpreted, do we not move into speculation and conjecture?



Figure 6.7. Sobuza and the trekkers.

I return to *De Voortrekkers* to explore gestural and performance theories where only theories of representation have held sway.

As the saga of the Landman family unfolds, they encounter a Zulu man, 'Sobuza' – once a lieutenant of King Dingaan, now newly converted against the savagery of his people by American missionaries that have settled near the kingdom. Little is known about the actor who plays Sobuza, beyond his first (or last) name, 'Goba'. Parsons identifies him as 'Africa's first indigenous film star', having featured in several two/three-reelers produced by Schlesinger a few years before he is cast again in *De Voortrekkers* (2013, 646).

Like other black South African performers of the time, Goba is unnamed and uncredited in *De Voortrekkers*, subsuming him almost completely in the character he plays and the role he represents.

Colonisation in South Africa, and its culminant, apartheid, controlled the collective movements of people, but also operated at the level of actual, singular bodies, their postures and the scale of the smallest gestures. The African body became the site of physical brutalities and the systematic, quietly violent process, occurring in the everyday spaces between wars, rebellions, riots and arrests, of transforming ideologies of colonial conquest and racial domination into corporeal facts, including determinations of *how* (not just where) individuals were permitted to carry their bodies.

For black South Africans, these ideologies were incorporated (taken into the body) and came to form part of their *habitus* – a term coined by sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, as 'the way society becomes deposited in persons in the form of lasting dispositions, or trained capacities and structured propensities to think, feel and act in determinant ways, which then guide them' (Wacquant 2005 cited in Navarro 2006, 16). In the case of black South Africans, the oppressive structures of colonialism and what would later become Apartheid dictated onto their bodies ways of moving and interacting with space, things and people of 'other' classes and turned subjugation and inferiority into a lived bodily experience from the inside, not just a social and political effect from the outside.

De Voortrekkers presents an interesting study of not only expressive gestures in the silent film, but also of how the colonial imagination defines and depicts the preferable set of *gestures/ways of moving* for Africans at that time. The narrative intends to tell the story of the triumph of the Afrikaner settlers over unforgiving wilderness and its even wilder natives. The movements of the 'black' bodies on screen, read not simply as representative symbolic signs serving this narrative, but as the presentations of *how* 'good' or 'bad' Africans move, reveal the aspiration within the colonial imaginary of installing itself into actual bodies and offers an example of how the cinema of the time worked as a tool that not only enacted but also furthered this process.

'Dingaan' and 'Sobuza' enjoy a dubious privilege within the narrative and within the frame. Both are coded differently by their movements within the film

– they move more vigorously than the marginal, stilted figures we saw previously and are in fact placed at the centre of the screen in a much more theatrical composition than are the latter.

Sobuza first enters the frame an upright figure, gesturing towards the missionaries (Figure 6.8, with Sobuza right of screen). His appearance follows that of King Dingaan, who we see at his *kraal* (homestead) ordering his people about and Dingaan uses two women as a footstool.

After Sobuza's encounter with the American missionaries, however, he acquires a new lexicon of inscriptive gestures which he recites throughout the rest of the film: he covers his spear with his open hand; he points upwards to the sky; he turns his gaze to the heavens.

A few scenes later, in a moment of revelation, Sobuza refuses to carry out his king's odious order to kill one of the king's sons. He is banished from the kingdom and forced to roam the cruel hinterland. Exhausted and near death, he is rescued by the leader of the migrating Afrikaner *Voortrekkers*, Piet Retief). In







Figure 6.8 [top left]. Sobuza gesturing towards the missionaries.

Figure 6.9 [top right]. Dingane uses two women as a footstool.

Figure 6.10 [left]. Sobuza encounters American missionaries.

a fever of gratitude, he renounces his Zulu tribe and declares his allegiance to the cause of the Afrikaner settler; a moment punctuated by one of the film's few biblical inter-titles: 'Henceforth thou art my Father and my Chief and thy people shall be my people.'

Within the narrative, this is the scene in which Sobuza forms an alliance with the Afrikaners; he will later consummate this alliance by killing his former king, Dingaan. Visually and in terms of motility, this is a moment of rebirth – the figure of Sobuza collapses as if dead at the feet of Retief. It ceases to move.



Figure 6.11. Sobuza refuses to carry out the King's orders



Figure 6.12. Retief discovers Sobuza half-dead.

This collapse is perhaps like a metaphorical loss of habitus – of the potential for and power to gesture. The body is exhausted of all possibility of movement and corporeal memory is truncated.

When the figure of Sobuza is 'brought back alive', the figures from our earlier frames, that stood eerily still, reappear on either side of him (Figure 6.13). They take him by the arms and lead him off-screen, echoing the stilted movement of wrangling the horses. Sobuza is now part of the household of Retief, a servant and object of use, like a trusted horse.

Sobuza from now on 'speaks' in a different style and tone – the figure takes on a cowering posture, never fully standing upright again; gestures become over-animated, over-pronounced and childlike. A new *habitus* emerges through this phraseology of the body. In his new role of servant, Sobuza's gestures now echo those of Dingaan's own servants – the women who acted as his human chair and served his beer in earlier frames. These new gestures construct a particular incarnation of not just acceptable 'blackness' but also 'black maleness and femaleness' in their performance.

Of performance and gesture

What can be said about performance beyond 'good' and 'bad'? What is behind these value judgements? To tease this out, I return to gesture as the primary element of screen presence in general and screen performance in particular.











Figure 6.13 [top left]. Sobuza and the trekkers. Note the men on either side of Sobuza from earlier Frame (see Figures 6.1 and 6.2).

Figure 6.14 [top right]. Sobuza with head bowed.

Figure 6.15 [middle left]. Sobuza has acquired a new *habitus*.

Figure 6.16 [middle right]. Sobuza's adopts the gestures of a servant.

Figure 6.17 [left]. Sobuza's gestures of servitude.

To an actor, gestures are not just spontaneous, fleeting emergences. They are discrete, knowable actions of the body, carrying emotion and meaning, that are carefully studied, rehearsed, repeated and performed – recited, how phrases of a mundane conversation, might, through repetition and stylisation, be transformed to poetry. That excess quality of expressivity in a gesture, beyond its practical function, is essential to an actor's craft – making a cup of tea becomes a revelation of impatience or betrays the character's alcohol problem in the tremors while pouring.

The mute playwright, director and teacher, Francois Delsarte, studied this connection and curated a rich repertoire of expressive movements for the modern actor. Although this technique has given way to more subtle approaches, like the psychological gesture formalised by Chekov (which is a gesture that the actor performs 'internally' in their imagination, to make the performance more subtle), many actors, from the grand Kabuki stages to the plastic sets of soapie opera studios, short-hand the interior intentions, states and personalities of the characters they portray through gestures that have been borrowed and refined from older systems of performative movement.

In *Eloquent Gestures: The Transformation of Performance Style in the Griffith Biograph Films* (1992), Pearson traces the evolution of performance style in early American cinema: prior to 1908, she observes that cinematic performance emerged out of theatrical conventions – a performance style she describes as 'histrionically' coded (1992, 55).

She traces the evolution of film acting styles specifically in the biographs of D.W. Griffith. By 1916, of a number of shifts in filmmaking conventions (such as editing and camera composition), the development of realism in cinematic story-telling – in other words, a cinema that was more mimetic of true or real life – as well as the emergence of the star system and the longer feature film in Hollywood, called for more complex, psychologically motivated characters.

At this point, a new style of acting had developed in which the 'characters' thoughts are revealed through a combination of gesture, expressions, glances and props' (Pearson 1992, 43). This code, described as the verisimilar code, was considered more sophisticated, nuanced and believable by reviewers and audiences alike. To expand, in the histrionic code: 'actors deliberately struck attitudes, holding each gesture and abstracting it from the flow of motion until the audience had "read it"' (Pearson 1992, 25). This style is characterised by 'digital' gestures, isolated from an otherwise continuous flow of the movement of the body. They are discrete units, isolated, simplified and repeated to form a limited lexicon. Following the conventions of theatrical melodrama, the mini gestures on either side of the expressive gesture are left out of the performance: 'The elimination of the small gestures brings about the physical equivalent of silence between the grand, posed gestures, resulting in the "discrete, discontinuous elements and gaps" of digital communication' (Pearson 1992, 25).

The verisimilar code abandoned the conventions of the histrionic: 'Actors no longer portrayed emotions and states of mind by selecting from a pre-established repertoire but by deciding what was appropriate for a particular character in particular circumstances' (Pearson 1992, 21). In this new code, actors did not pose in 'digital' gesture, but rather moved in a continuous flow – a movement 'composed of little details rather than broad sweeping motions' (1992, 21). This analysis of style allows for discussion of performance beyond good/bad, believable/unconvincing value judgements. *De Voortrekker* was created in the spirit of the silent epics of the era of the biograph over which Griffith held popular sway. In discussing the actor Goba's performance, it can be noted that his style falls into a histrionic code, contrasted with the performances of the other actors (representing Dutch, British and Portuguese characters), which follow a more verisimilar, naturalist style.

Goba's lexicon of only a few gestures, as well as the heightened, exaggerated pitch at which he delivers his static, unnatural gestures brings to the audience the experience of not only the character, but also the process of the character's construction. This style of performance carries with it a self-consciousness – the performer is not presenting an everyday, natural state of being but a heightened, idealised one. With each overt gesture, the actor telegraphs the underlying proclamation, 'I am making believe!' to his audience.

In this way, Goba creates distance between himself and the character Sobuza and thus opens space for an analysis that is not absolutely determined by the representation or the character; an analysis that recognises the contribution of the actor to the process of creating the representation. It is in this gap that, I argue, we can begin to posit traces of agency and resistance to representations, for the performer as well as the audience. By offering caricature, the actor Goba frustrates an audience's attempts to swallow the character of Sobuza whole. As Shohat and Stam (2014, 182) point out 'spectators may look beyond caricatural representations to see the oppressed performing self'.

In our discussions of early South African cinema, or any colonial, racist cinematic traditions, we do not leave room for this 'beyond representations', which spectators are very often able to reach. This 'beyond' is often couched in terms of performance, or acting, when it comes to fictional cinematic characters. Audiences know a performance when they see one, and are able to dislocate the actor from the character. It is in this gap that a resistance to the implications of that representation can be situated, especially for oppressed audiences watching oppressed actors, playing oppressed characters within oppressive situations. While it will not be scientifically measurable just how much resistance is born here, it may be hypothesised.

By shifting focus from whole representations to the simplest units of that process, gestures, more nuanced observations are made possible. We can speak of tone, pitch, style of gesture, leading us to ideas of codes of performance and

placing us in the realm of *actor* rather than director and apparatus. This is one of many new directions that cinema as *gesture* enables us to take when reading early South African cinematic images.

De Voortrekkers offers an example of what Saks recognises as the binary life of the historical film (2011, 137–187) – first, as cinematic storytelling that deals in historical re-enactment, and second, as a historical artefact in itself. The first mode of the historical film asks us, from our present vantage point, to question the strength of this storytelling, and weigh the persuasiveness of its representation against historical facts. Of the second mode, Saks writes:

> Historical films may also seek a bridge between present and past that allows the present to complete a mission aborted by a side turn in the history of things, which is now, finally, able to be overcome. The goal is to reach into the past and retrieve the kernel of its spirit, showing that new times are the fulfilment of that spirit in spite of the side tracking of intervening history. Here the goal is caught up with an act of mourning: mourning for the abortion of spirit which kept the prescient actor in his place. And the goal is to return the flow of history to his name, causing him to live a second life in our imaginations. (2011, 144)

I am interested in the possibility of reading *De Voortrekkers* in this second mode, in a way that retrieves traces or a spirit of the past that sits beyond the film's narrative or matrix of representation. In this film, the actors 'kept in their place' by a narrative that emerges out of a racist colonial discourse are those performers that portrayed the black slaves, savages and servants. The force of this portrayal, the continuous presence of these performers on the screen, *must* be recognised as something over and above what is portrayed, not simply as something overwhelmed by it. In this chapter I wished to demonstrate how a different way of *receiving* the images of these black bodies might free them from the particular burden of representations placed on them by the narratives they carry, and by so doing, return some power and agency to the performers whose traces continue to haunt us from the screen.

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07

Reframing South African Cinema History: Modernity, the New Africa Movement and Beyond

Keyan G. Tomaselli and Anna-Marie Jansen van Vuuren

How does one write the history of cinema in a fractured South Africa? In approaching this task, in cooperation with Anna-Marie, I (Keyan) will discuss my own encounter with South African film scholars and film practitioners, in the broader multi-disciplinary context that draws on historical materialism. Our chapter examines various understandings of modernity and the role that cinema was seen to be playing in relation to different constituencies that contested each other during the twentieth century. Our lens is the post-1990 political transition that prefaced new challenges on how to examine South African cinema historically.

South African cinema history has been contested since the first newsreels documented the second South African War between 1899–1902. The opposing ideological currents could be felt as the country transited from disparate Boer[1] republics and British colonies after the War, through the formation of Union in 1910, apartheid in 1948 and the post-apartheid era after 1990. Our focus is on periodised approaches to South African cinema studies within these respective periods.

Until the publication of *The Cinema of Apartheid* (Tomaselli 1988), Thelma Gutsche's (1972) *The History and Social Significance of Motion Pictures in South*

1 Boer meaning 'farmer', a culturally specific term for descendants of the *Voortrekkers* who migrated to the north during the Great Trek. See Pretorius (2002).

Africa 1895–1940[2] was the only comprehensive study chronicling the social history of South African film culture, since complemented by recent studies (Botha 2012; Melnick 2016; Parsons 2018). Largely ignored is *Die Bioskoop in Diens van die Volk* (*The Cinema in Service of the People*), published in two parts by Hans Rompel in 1942.

Rompel's and Gutsche's opposing approaches to film and modernity fall within the broad framework of cultural theory, but in entirely different ways. Gutsche was a government- and then African Film Production (AFP)-employed supervisor for educational films, while the Dutch-born Rompel was a psychiatrist turned film critic for *Die Burger* newspaper who moonlighted as press photographer, translator, playwright and novelist.[3] Where Gutsche was concerned with the film industry's orderly encounter with a stabilising modernity prior to 1945, Rompel argued against modernity, seeking an ideological bearing for the Afrikaner '*volksiel*' (national soul/spirit). Gutsche's book has withstood the test of time, in contrast to Rompel, whose work faded from scholarly interest.[4] Gutsche and Rompel's works are, however, two important case studies in a discussion of two separate movements that proposed film culture for their own distinct purposes.

Film culture requires awareness of intellectual movements that inform its reception and practice, and is an expression of modernity (Masilela 2003). Apart from capital, as represented in the Schlesinger Organisation, the two movements that negotiated modernity during the first half of the twentieth century, were the New Africa Movement (NAM) to which Gutsche was connected, and the Conservative Cultural Theorists (CCT) led by Rompel. NAM, comprised of 'new African intellectuals', held that film offered a cultural facilitator for entry into modernity. In contrast, CCT attempted to halt the emergence of modernity, even as apartheid was imposing a racially sectional modernising route towards it. The two movements are examined below.

Ntongela Masilela, Thelma Gutsche and the New Africa Movement

NAM was first discussed by Ntongela Masilela, whose awareness of modernity originated from C.L.R. James's *Modern Politics* (1960) and Pixley Isaka Ka Seme's manifesto *The Regeneration of Africa* (1906). Masilela associates

2 This was a reproduction of her 1946 PhD thesis dealing with the industry from the silent era through talkies and ending with the socio-economic developments during World War II. Also see Eckardt 2005a, 2005b.

3 Rompel wrote on diverse topics from adventure stories (*Die Land van die Farao's* [The Land of the Pharoes]) to addressing marital problems (*Trou is Nie Perdekoop Nie: 'n Boek oor Huweliksprobleme* [Marriage is Not Horse Trading: A Book about Marital Problems]).

4 Rompel's work was unearthed by Tomaselli in the late 1970s, and later revisited by Michael Eckardt.

modernity with his 'own personal history as an African', and with 'the establishment of a democratic intellectual culture by individuals' that he collectively termed 'the New African Movement' (Masilela 2003, 15–30). NAM includes H.I.E Dhlomo, R.V. Selope, Thelma Gutsche, Nadine Gordimer, André P. Brink, J.M. Coetzee, John Tengo Jabavu, Elijah Makiwane, Pambani Jeremiah Mzimba and Walter Benson, all of whom 'articulated the necessity of constructing modernity' (Masilela 2003, 15). Masilela and Isabel Balseiro's anthology, *To Change Reels: Film and Film Culture in South Africa* (2003), focuses on 'black voices'. Masilela examines the relationship between film and leisure in terms of broad historical social processes backgrounded by NAM. His plea for analysis of 'film culture' is based on a 'consciousness of precedent' (to account for the recapitulation of the historical sequence of objects (in our case, theories about film and industry) to which it belongs. This framework requires 'an awareness of the intellectual movements that informed its early reception and practice', regardless of their respective ideological persuasions, a framework developed in my book, *Encountering Modernity* (Tomaselli 2006).

Preceding the formation of the Union in 1910 (that made the country a British dominion), NAM popularised a particular type of modernity. Solomon T. Plaatje, for example, used 'travelling cinema' to screen clips donated by Henry Ford, Tuskegee President Robert Russa Morton and documentaries about American New Negroes throughout South Africa (see Legassick 1976; Masilela in Tomaselli 2006). Plaatje believed that the establishment of a national film culture was 'necessitated by the making and construction of modernity in a context of political domination'. The appreciation of film culture extended to those New Africans who had not initially embraced cinema such as H.I.E. Dhlomo, 'arguably the greatest advocate of modernity in South Africa', and who wrote on film censorship and its psychological impact in the Zulu-language newspaper *Ilanga lase Natal* (Masilela 2006; Saint 2018).

Despite the social fractures caused by segregation prior to 1948, when the victorious National Party (NP) introduced apartheid, Gutsche is argued by Masilela to have influenced NAM's ideological perspectives through insisting that film 'is just as crucial as are literature or music in the creation and construction of modernistic sensibilities' (Masilela 2005, 15).[5] Poet and academic Benedict Wallet Vilakazi's friendship with Gutsche enabled film culture 'as a central part of New Negro modernity, as the emergence of the Sophiatown Renaissance in subsequent years was to confirm' (Masilela 'Sophiatown Renaissance'). In the 1940s and 1950s, before its destruction as part of government policy, Sophiatown was the epicentre of a multi-racial intellectual community, where

5 NAM intellectuals produced *original* scholarship that characterised modernity's qualitative essence within the South African context.

musicians, artists and journalists rubbed shoulders and exchanged ideas. The Sharpeville massacre in 1960 resulted in political repression that Masilela (2005, xix) equates to the decapitation of the Movement and the 'making of modernity' in South Africa. Our argument below is that residues of NAM continued despite these setbacks.

Gutsche's implicit method was treated as primary material by my PhD thesis (Tomaselli 1983), which reassesses her factual narrative through historical materialism. Gutsche lauds industrialist Isadore Schlesinger[6] for bringing a cohesive order out of moral, cultural and technological chaos by establishing AFP and its distribution arm, African Theatres Trust, in 1913. I drew on Ernst Mandel's (1978) 'long wave theory' pertaining to late capitalism, of technological revolutions and economic cycles to explain the conditions that enabled Schlesinger's monopolistic consolidation from 1913 onwards. The business and technological chaos surrounding film production, exhibition and distribution prior to 1913 was stabilised by Schlesinger into a single business sector. Mandel's periodisation explains how new technologies drive new economic cycles and offered me a way of understanding Gutsche's narrative, in relation to global phases of technological innovation and economic cycles into which the nascent South Africa was entering.

Initially, I had considered Gutsche to have argued a moralist, pro-monopoly and uncritical frame of reference in lauding Schlesinger's industry consolidation. Masilela, however, cautioned that I had not considered Gutsche's historical context. Gutsche's anxiety about the need for monopoly capital to consolidate order out of the social chaos of the early 1900s stemmed from the consequences that could arise from the following features of modernity: the technological and mining revolutions; demographic upheaval; chaotic urbanisation, as well as the entrance of European and American forms of modernity into South Africa through film (Masilela 2000, 55).

Gutsche's thesis has withstood the test of time. In contrast, Rompel's forgotten imprint found resonance in enduring Afrikaner myths and their manifestation in the themes of Afrikaans films from the 1960s to date (Jansen van Vuuren and Verster 2018). Afrikaans film directors after 1965 supported modernity and urbanisation in their plots, characters and genre resolutions, while implicitly critiquing Rompellian ideological residues.

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6 Schlesinger, an American, arrived in Johannesburg in 1894. By 1913, through his insurance business, he had gained a favourable reputation for business organisation and financial acumen (Gutsche 1972, 117). Schlesinger' Consolidated Films employed Gutsche between 1947 and 1959.

Rompel and Conservative Cultural Theory

Rompel (1902–1981) headed The *Reddingsdaadbond-Amateur-Rolprent-Organisasie* (Rescue Action League Amateur Film Organisation) or RARO and its distribution arm, *Volksbioscope* (People's bioscopes), from June 1940 (Wheeler 1988, 34). He became the CCT figurehead for RARO and KARFO (*Kerklike Afrikaanse Rolprent en Fotografiese Organisasie* – 'the Afrikaans Churches' Film and Photographic Association'). RARO was affiliated to the *Reddingsdaadbond*, established after the First Economic Congress of the People (1939) proposed an adapted capitalism, *Volkskapitalisme* (People's capitalism). Its aim was to empower Afrikaners through interconnecting cultural, economic and national consciousnesses (O'Meara 1983). Creating an Afrikaans 'cultural' film industry was an important part of that aim (Wheeler 1988, 32).

Die Bioskoop in Diens van die Volk formed part of the 'Second Trek'-series,[7] an allusion to the Boers' migration from the farms to the cities during the 1930s Great Depression, as opposed to the First or Great Trek that took place from 1836. The Second Trek was a delayed outcome caused by the British destruction of the Boers' pastoral societies during the late part of the South African War (1899–1902) (see Pretorius 2002). Following the scorched earth policy, Empire soldiers burnt farms and interned women and children in concentration camps to eliminate Boer guerrilla bases. Over 26 000 Afrikaans women and children had died from disease and neglect in the camps.[8] These traumatic conditions underpinned post-War urbanisation, especially after the Depression. Publisher Piet Meyer argued that the British with their 'imported system' had halted the development of the Afrikaner's economic system that was expressed in farm life (Beukes 1938). Thus, CCT was built on nostalgia for pre-war times.

Rompel was concerned with Afrikaners being culturally alienated through modernity, capitalism and urbanisation. Urbanisation was equated with defeat, genocide, depravity and cultural impotence. The city was argued to be contaminating the Afrikaner soul, and CCT was to assist Afrikaners reconnect with the soil (*bodem*). This feeling resonated with other contemporary political and aesthetic movements, especially in literature, which manifested in the enduring myth of 'the farm' (Van Coller and Van Jaarsveld 2018). Thus, artists were to be trained to draw inspiration from the *bodem*. Ironically, Rompel proposed features of the Nazi approach (an ultimate industrial urbanist modernism created to service a war economy) towards sustaining pre-modernity via cinema development as a cultural industry within a pastoral economy. Although Nazism had influenced

7 All titles of the series were published in Afrikaans. Titles include '*The Afrikaans University and His Task in our Nation's Lives*', '*Marriage and Family*' and '*The Living Conditions and Education of the Voortrekker Child*'.

8 20 000 black people also perished in these camps. See Mohlamme (1985).

Rompel's views on the management of an Afrikaner cultural industry, his ideas on representation were gleaned predominantly from early Russian cinema. Of relevance here is that, although the African intelligentsia studied histories of pre-colonial African societies, they also embraced elements of modernity, while CCT mobilised supporters around nostalgia for the pre-modern, pre-war past.

Rompel's writing coincided with rising Afrikaner nationalism, also evident in the subtext of South Africa's first short sound films. In Rompellian vein, *Sarie Marais* (1931) narrates the story of a Boer prisoner of war, Jan, on Ceylon, writing a letter to his girlfriend, Sarie. Through music and lyrics, Jan longs to return to his Transvaal farm. *Moedertjie* (*Little Mother*, 1931) continues the *bodem* narrative: not knowing the whereabouts of her son, a mother leaves the farm to find him. At a train station we learn that she blames the 'British imperialists' for the ills that might have befallen her son in 'the evil city'.[9] Though directed by AFP's American director, Joseph Albrecht, and linked to British Commonwealth capital via Schlesinger, RARO mobilised these films for anti-imperialist purposes. The South African War proved popular as a backdrop, with Joseph Goebels and the Nazi Ministry of Propaganda also using it in the 1941 film *Ohm Krüger*.[10] It conveys a prophecy by Kruger 'that the mighty foes of the British nation will one day avenge the injustice done to the Boers' (Hallstein 2002).

The CCT filmmakers were to draw inspiration from the *bodem* (in this context it refers to the farming lifestyle) (Wheeler 1988). CCT offered a *positive set of* moral Christian values. Rompel laments commercialisation as robbing the industry of its art and idealism, proposing instead use of amateur filmmakers associated with Afrikaner cultural, language and religious organisations. With a keen understanding of the relationship between culture and power, an empowering discourse was organisationally manifested in the cultural festivals linked to historical events (such as the 1938 centenary of the Great Trek), while the parallel establishment of Afrikaner-owned financial institutions was designed to compete with, and then appropriate, English-dominated urban-based capital.

Though critical of CCT because of its 'anti-modernist' tendencies, Masilela concedes that 'paradoxically, Rompel's anti-modernism was itself a modernizing project' (Masilela 2005, xv). CCT wanted to organise the industry to produce films mobilising the nationalistic *kultur* (cultural) dimension characterised by a pre-modern life (driven by aesthetic, ethical and spiritual values) that resisted the excesses of capitalism. CCT relied on rich philosophical and popular dimensions, drawn from a narrow Calvinist interpretation whose aesthetics of resistance

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9 *Moedertjie* was followed up by *'n Dogter van die Veld* (*A Daughter of the Veld, 1933*), its title again indicative of the film's message.

10 The credits list Hans Steinhoff as the artistic director. The lead actor, Emil Jannings, directed the actors.

called on contemporary exemplars such as Soviet and German cinema, mixing it with the British Documentary Movement's realist documentary practices (Tomaselli and Eckhardt 2011). This aesthetic was a driving theoretical force in creating culturally specific films that were pure, as Rompel demanded that Afrikaners reflect their true God-given orientation in film.

Rompel rejected fantasy in film narrative, as realism would force the 'Afrikaans cultural film industry' to remain truthful to reality and confront viewers with real-life conflict situations as amateurs would be unable to produce a high-quality fiction film (Rompel 1938). In this pursuit, Rompel mimicked Eisenstein's casting of real farmers in *Battleship Potempkin* (1925), intercut with documentary footage (Rompel 1942,17). Yet while CCT drew on industrial *zivilisation* models offered by early Soviet directors, it ignored their respective theories of film-as-film-form, devised to chart routes into different arrangements of modernity and democracy in their societies.

Rompel's archaic philosophy clashed, however, with the modernising aims and objectives of both the *Reddingsdaadbond* (Salvation Association) and the Broederbond (Band of Brothers – a secret group of intellectuals that influenced political, economic and cultural policies) (Giliomee 2004, 352). The pastoralist based CCT lost favour in the 1940s when the Broederbond took the Afrikaner struggle to the cities where it competed with English capital.

Gutsche's 'anglophilia' and her 'impatience with cultural nationalism' were in marked contrast to Rompel's CCT prescription (Eckardt 2004). Where Gutsche eschewed South African films as largely amateurish and called for industrial consolidation under the auspices of AFP, Rompel argued for an independent '*volkseie*' (Afrikaner nationalist) amateur-driven industry. Gutsche overlooked texts and aesthetics, while Rompel examined film as art, dismissing commercial cinema as mass entertainment.

In terms of their similarities, Gutsche preferred European classicism, rejected American sensationalism and, like Rompel, frowned upon 'American escapism'. They both investigated cinematic backdrops to a nation-in-the making, poised on the cusp of a stabilising modernity. Masilela later observed that both Gutsche and Rompel embraced a Eurocentric perspective of modernity, while later scholars proposed a Third World approach (Masilela 2005, xvii).

Post-1948: KARFO and Apartheid Film Theory

Where Rompel and RARO were driven by a nostalgia for the lost pastoralism and values developed by the Boers before the War, with the NP election victory in 1948, apartheid was the mechanism that the Broederbond used to successfully turn the tables on their class, cultural and language subordination. Because of its divergence from the Broederbond (and materialism in general), Rompel's culturalism failed to find wider currency. However, the ascendant NP

government did establish a film subsidy, but not state control of the industry in 1956 to enable Afrikaners to realise their 'own' '*volkseie*' films, an objective that Rompel had extensively propagated (Tomaselli and Eckardt 2011).

The vacuum created by RARO's silent disintegration[11] was filled in 1947 by the Dutch Reformed Church, which then created KARFO (Wheeler 1988, 39).[12] KARFO deployed film to guide the hundreds of thousands of displaced Afrikaners who had migrated to the cities between 1903 and 1940. Known as poor whites, they became unskilled miners, labouring for the enemy (British imperialism) under the supervision of skilled blacks. In contrast to Rompel's pastoral films, KARFO followed a pragmatic approach to socialise the urban Afrikaner and 'redress the stereotypical media image of Afrikaners created by RARO and others' (Tomaselli and Eckhardt 2011).

John Grierson, leader of the 1930s British Documentary Movement, was invited by KARFO to South Africa in 1949. Grierson was excited by the vigorous debate he found on nation-building, and film's potential in the propagation of public information in a fast-industrialising South Africa (Grierson 1990). A Scotsman, he shared anti-imperialist sentiments with Afrikaner nationalists. His unpublished papers described British expatriates as 'pampered Whites' who embodied 'a sort of decadent evaluation of the Imperial idea in which privilege is accepted without any appropriate sense of leadership and guidance' (Tomaselli 2000a, 47).

Grierson found himself sandwiched between the conservative cultural theorists and the Broederbond's pragmatists, leading him to identify the disjuncture between segregation and Western liberalism. The NP pragmatists nevertheless implemented the recommendations within an apartheid frame of reference that embraced modernity as the new site of Afrikaner struggle. KARFO took its production cues from both the public information objective (Grierson) and Soviet propaganda (Sergei Eisenstein), irrespective of their different realisms. This may seem paradoxical; however, by selectively reading both movements, KARFO extracted what would be strategically useful to their own concerns.

For Grierson, blacks were patiently awaiting their political moment. As taken as Grierson was with the vibrancy of apartheid's modernising experiment, he understood this arrangement as merely a 'desperate' political phase through which the country would need to negotiate towards a fully-fledged democracy (Tomaselli and Hees 1999, and see John Grierson [1990] in South Africa). Grierson thus spurned KARFO and offered recommendations that assumed a state management (educational) operation that resulted in the establishment

11 J.J.S. Botha, Kerk en Rolprent, in *Die Afrikaanse Rolprentamateur,* 1 April 1947.

12 In 1955, KARFO's name was changed to CARFO – the Christian Afrikaans Film and Photographic Organisation.

of the National Film Board in 1964.[13] Repressive legislation intensified when Hendrik Verwoerd became prime minister in 1958. Despite this, this period witnessed the next NAM generation, and the first to actually make films.

NAM from the 1950s: Lionel Ngakane (1928–2003)

On moving to Sophiatown in 1936, Lionel's father, a teacher, set up the Diepkloof Reformatory for young black offenders between 1935 and 1949, with Alan Paton as principal. Sensing Lionel's interest in cinema, his father gave the seven year old a 35mm projector, on which he screened small strips of film. At age ten, Ngakane volunteered at a monthly open-air cinema.

Similar to Plaatje, Ngakane was a journalist before entering the film industry. He wrote for the *Rand Daily Mail*, a newspaper that reported on state repression, and the first African pictorial magazine, *Zonk*, before being head- hunted by *Drum* magazine. The latter was central to providing opportunities to writers who broadly constituted NAM. In London, Ngakane interviewed Zoltan Korda, who had the rights to Paton's novel, *Cry, The Beloved Country* (1948). The novel describes social protest against conditions imposed by apartheid, with whites fearful of 'native' crime and blacks who experience social instability, tribal disintegration, the impoverishment of the native reserves and black urbanisation.

Ngakane smuggled himself into a casting session and edged out Sidney Poitier for the role of Absalom Kumalo, the lead character's son. Korda then employed Ngakane as his personal assistant. Ngakane had a crucial influence in terms of artistic integrity in adapting the original source material on two feature films, *Cry the Beloved Country* (1951) and *A Dry White Season* (1989). In the latter, starring Marlon Brando, and based on an André Brink novel, an apolitical middle-class white man assists his black gardener in searching for his jailed son. In the process, Brando's character becomes a target of the vicious security police.[14]

Vukani/Awake (1962), Ngakane's first film as director, depicts how black labour contributed to white wealth. Its non-theatrical distribution interfaced Ngakane with the few other African filmmakers then active. When in 1966 the Austrian Socialist Party invited him to a symposium in Vienna on Third World Cinema, he proposed an African filmmakers' organisation, presented to the Carthage Film Festival in Tunis, and in 1967 FEPACI – the Pan-African Federation of Film Makers – was formed (Ngakane 1983). The postcolonial moment then sweeping across the continent enabled FEPACI's emergence. At the inaugural FEPACI conference in Algiers (1968), a constitution was written and officers

13 Although Grierson envisaged the Film Board to be a facilitator in public discussion within the liberal humanist context, it became the propaganda arm of the pragmatists. See Hees (1991).

14 Imdb. A Dry White Season. https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0097243/

elected, with Ngakane made honorary president. He was often the sole South African representative at African and international film festivals, and the only active South African member of FEPACI until the mid-1990s (Crowdus 1986).

Tommie Meyer and the pragmatist Afrikaans filmmakers

Residual CCT was on the retreat by the 1960s, with the urban-based economic pragmatists in the ascension. In film, one of the pragmatists was Tommie Meyer (1928–2017), who understood the relationship between culture and power (Meyer 1994). After working at Jamie Uys Films for four years, Meyer created Kavalier Films in 1965 to produce genre features (directed by Elmo de Witt, Jan Scholtz, Dirk de Villiers and Daan Retief). These directors symbolically empowered urban-bound migrants by stepping away from CCT whose proponents had marginalised staid Afrikaner characters to 'the farm', as in 'n *Nasie Hou Koers* (*A Nation Holds [its] Course*, 1939). In this film, Rompel had compiled footage from amateur cinematographers depicting young scouts who belonged to the organisation known as Voortrekkers, carrying a *fakkel* (lit torch) from Cape Town to Pretoria. Screened in 144 venues to 500 000 viewers, its success was its commemoration of the centenary of the Great Trek. RARO's other films mostly failed due to poor quality. CCT's built-in obsolescence had lost ground with pragmatic Afrikaners.

Meyer was instrumental in charting a pragmatic cinema that built a commercially based industry, while simultaneously addressing deep-seated cultural traumas through popular genres that affirmed the (second) urban trek. Meyer was, in Gramscian terms (Gramsci 1971), an organic intellectual, as the Kavaliers films leveraged the folk wisdom of previously repressed Afrikaners and brought to the fore the need for the myth of 'the farm' to be rearticulated in an urban setting (in the battle for capital). The newly won state now began to consolidate cultural power and accumulate wealth through the establishment of statutory cultural institutions like the Performing Arts Councils, the National Film Board and the censorship apparatus.

The purging of Rompel-led CCT had required a genre like the insider-outsider plot structure, where the 'rural' Afrikaner ('insider') on the farm is visited by the urban 'outsider' who transforms the moral insider 'into a restless urban animal who forsakes the farm, family and the rural community' (Tomaselli 2006, 144). Linked as it was to broader Afrikaner resistance strategies that engaged and appropriated (rather than isolating itself) from English-dominated capital, the genre depicted the pure and innocent *boeredogter* character (boer daughter) being traumatised, killed and abandoned in the narrative. This archetype takes on the collective quest for liberation in a society dominated by the impulses of modernity. Discussions with the genre's contemporary directors revealed unfamiliarity with Rompel's work, but nevertheless their scripts were examples

of the urban–rural tensions that he addressed. The *Boereplaas*-genre[15] originated from many young Afrikaner intellectuals during the 1930s and 1940s. This earlier generation had read Rompel's articles in *Die Burger* and the cultural magazine *Die Huisgenoot* (The Home Companion) (Eckhardt 2005b). Rompel's mythologising about 'the farm' work may have implicitly influenced Afrikaans cinema because he represented a particular strand of resistance theory (CCT) that was undermined by the later genre in its characters, plotlines, and traumatic resolutions that sought to rethink the value of an, if unpleasant, Afrikaner redemption to be achieved in the city.

The genre films produced between 1965 and 1980 accorded such popular legitimation and redemption to the second trek where the pragmatist Broederbond (unlike RARO) engaged directly with British imperialism. The genre's characters encoded the traumatic psychological contours of ideological struggle and discredited the unidimensional pastoralist characters proposed by Rompel and propagated by Jamie Uys[16] in *Doodkry is Min* (They Can't Keep Us Down, 1961).[17] Continuity anomalies identified issues that could not be explained in narrative conventions but rather via 'structured presences' in contrast to the idea of structured absences. These related to the trappings of the 'new Afrikaner class', which presaged a headlong rush into conspicuous consumption after 1948. This required a political economy approach that analysed film texts *in relation* to their contexts, where the representation of class is a significant signifier.[18] In the end, urbanisation was gained at the cost of an expedient English–Afrikaner alliance threaded through an increasing capitalist compromise.

It was during Tommie Meyer's time that Pieter Fourie, a young communication scholar, offered a pragmatic but unimplemented model for the restructuring of a state-organised subsidy-driven film industry, which included the development of homeland-based (Bantustan) production ventures (Fourie 1982a). One of the key objectives of apartheid had been to re-fragment the Union geographically along racial, ethnic and language lines, and for 'border industries' to extract labour value from such territories, though this never occurred with the film industry.

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15 The term hails from the folksong '*O, Boereplaas*' meaning 'Boer farm'. Opera singer Mimi Coertse performed this song at the première of the film *Doodkry is Min* (Uys 1961). See Jan-Ad Stemmet, 'Doodkry is Min', http://www.mimosafilms.co.za/Archive/Film/61/doodkry-is-min

16 Uys often used friction between Afrikaners and English speakers as comic relief in his satirical films *Hans en die Rooinek* (1961), *Lord Oom Piet* (1962) and *Rip van Wyk* (1960).

17 Sponsored by the Afrikaner Academy of Arts and Science and the Federation of Afrikaner Cultural Organisations (FAK), the première at the Voortrekker Monument was attended by the state president, C.R. Swart.

18 An example is Jans Rautenbach's 1971 film with Katinka Heyns, *Pappalap* (Daddy Dearest).

NAM and theorising in exile

In 1982, Ngakane approached me to jointly facilitate a South African committee under the auspices of the International Film and Television Council (IFTC), Paris, a UNESCO affiliate.[19] Ngakane, as had Masilela, had become aware of my book, *The S.A. Film Industry*, first published in 1979. Neither knew the other, and each had contacted me separately. Ngakane established a South African Cinema Archive at the British Film Institute in the mid-1980s as a Council Project, raising funds through the Institute to facilitate the archiving of published and unpublished materials from South Africa.

In recognition of his achievements, in 1997, the University of Natal conferred, on the basis of my proposal, an honorary doctorate on Ngakane. In his statement he explained how he used his income from a 'forgettable film' (*Safari*, 1956, directed by Terence Young) to buy his first 16mm film camera:

> After several months playing with the camera and reading film books, I felt confident to make my first film. I decided to make a documentary on South Africa, as I was coming back to visit my parents. When I started filming, I pretended to be a camera-toting black tourist. It worked. I had no problems with the Special Branch police. In fact, when I was filming in a beerhall in Soweto, the white Superintendent assigned one of his security guards to protect me. (Ngakane 1997)

Ngakane returned to South Africa in the early 1990s. He worked with the National Film and Video Foundation and was an advisor on the All Africa M-Net Film Awards.

Apart from Ngakane, the International Defense and Aid Fund (IDAF) facilitated most exile discussion. Little was published by IDAF-linked filmmakers themselves. *Sechaba* (the African National Congress journal unbanned in February 1990) published mildly analytical articles that were not easily available inside South Africa. The international cultural boycott had meant that domestic filmmakers were excluded from the Pan African Film Festival in Ouagadougou, and were disconnected from discussions on Third Cinema (Tomaselli and Prinsloo 1992). This changed in 1990 when the Film and Allied Workers Organisation (FAWO) leveraged international interaction with the premier Third World festivals and attended Ouagadougou, clearing the way for South African inclusion (Currie 1989).

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19 This committee of exiled South African filmmakers and internal representatives was London-based and operated for most of the 1980s.

Revisiting Gutsche

Studies of South African cinema during the 1970s and 1980s were largely typified by their respective pro- and anti-apartheid positions in which early histories, like that of Gutsche, were read symptomatically rather than historically. The element of sacredness with which Masilela (2006) and others describe her tome, must have encoded the 'structure of feeling' that spoke to modernity and modernists, irrespective of ideological persuasion. Gutsche appealed across constituencies as her writing style created a sense of being there, forming part of breaking events, though she had completed her PhD before the onset of apartheid.

The recognition of social and possibly class experience was one that also typified reception from industry professionals to the publication of *The Cinema of Apartheid* – but in a different way. Where NAM had spanned nearly a hundred years of relatively open intellectual fermentation, of charting possible affirmative futures, in contrast, I was during the narrow window of the 1970s and 1980s negotiating repression, resistance and social regression, and largely then unaware of NAM as an overarching framework being simultaneously devised by Masilela.

Introducing neo-Marxist social analyses from the mid-1970s revealed the class dimensions of inequality. Capitalism and apartheid were recognised as interacting allies – rather than assuming, as did liberal analysis, that capitalism would naturally erode the irrationality of apartheid. *The Cinema of Apartheid* appeared at a time when philosopher Louis Althusser's (1971) work on ideological state apparatuses was popularised in the South African academy (Tomaselli 2000b). While critics of Althusserianism charged that it muted agency, overemphasising determining social structures, my book garnered noteworthy support from the anti-apartheid movement (located in a political economy framework which admits resistance) and writer-activists like Dennis Brutus and Gordimer; yet a local literary scholar dismissed the study for its lack of textual analysis (Willoughby 1991). The contradiction was stark, as like Gutsche, I deal with making sense of the industry rather than analysing filmic texts. However, my book is ambivalent on the relationship between race and class that typified much left-wing analysis during the 1980s (Collins 1991). Race and class are not analytical categories in Gutsche's writing. Rompel structures 'blacks', 'whites' and 'nationalists' out of the equation altogether, invoking '*volk*' (nation), '*publiek*' (public) and '*volkskuns*' (folk-art), assuming a homogeneous white Afrikaner group.

My PhD accords little clemency to Gutsche, as I had read her as offering primary material threaded through moralism. Our chapter is thus offered as redress of the need to read Gutsche's study in relation to her professional context. Masilela's influence is first acknowledged in his suggestion that *Encountering*

Modernity be composed within a revisionist framework that includes NAM (Tomaselli 2008). My argument was that the Afrikaner's pre-modern condition, the Edenic 'never-never land of pastoral harmony' (disturbed by the South African War), became a myth explaining urban discontent and the hope of a remedy in return (Greig 1980), also witnessed in early black cinema of the 1920s to the 1980s. In the later 1970s 'back to the homelands'-genre, white filmmakers fostered an aspiration within black audiences to return to their tribal lands. *Myth, Race and Power* (Tomaselli et al. 1986) examined how South Africa's state films, oppositional and UK-made television series engaged with apartheid (and its pragmatic ethnic and race-based constructions of separated modernities). This study fractured the prevailing understanding within an influential Afrikaner scholarly constituency (Fourie 1982b) that film (and television) could be understood as a self-evident model of (or for) reality (see Hees 1996).

The early nineties and South African cinema studies

South Africa opened to the African continent following the end of apartheid in 1994. Contemporary local studies, briefly examined below, form part of the growing oeuvre of historical work. As Edwin Hees (1993) observes, a disconcerting feature of Manthia Diawara's (1992) *African Cinema*: *Politics and Culture* was the exclusion of South Africa (except for a few passing references) from the discussion, an omission partly addressed by Bickford-Smith and Mendelsohn (2007). Hees admits historical causation for this, as South Africa was not colonised and decolonised as was the rest of the continent. NAM's questions of 'who is an African?' and how international relationships impact on definitions of 'South African cinema', remained open questions. Johan Blignaut and Martin Botha's (1992) *Movies Moguls Mavericks*: *South African Cinema, 1979–1991* and Botha and Adri van Aswegen's (1992) *Images of South Africa: The Rise of the Alternative Film* discuss 'national' industries, American cultural domination, government intervention and/or interference, distribution monopolies, and racial stereotyping. Both negotiate modernity, though differently to the routes taken by Gutsche, Grierson and Masilela.

Images of South Africa paradoxically attempts to marry Third Cinema postulates with intercultural communication theory. Though drawing on Fourie's correspondence theory (1982b) that equates media images with concrete reality, they recognised the need for a different route to negotiate through the structural violence imposed by apartheid on modernity in the search for a post-apartheid state. Such modernity would accept Teshome Gabriel's (1989) socialist Third Cinema analysis, based on its struggles with capitalism. Botha and van Aswegen certainly shifted the notion of 'a South African film culture' by recognising a pro-humanist pragmatism based on a kind of state-centred socialist political economy that would involve directors like Manie van Rensburg,

Gray Hofmeyr, Cedric Sundström, Ross Devenish, Elaine Proctor, Helena Noguera, Emil Nofal, Katinka Heyns and Jans Rautenbach[20] (Botha et al. 1996), and producers like Richard Green, who might be considered to be products of the post period of NAM (see Green 2019). Rautenbach had associated himself with Afrikaner literary dissidents, the *Sestigers* (the Sixtiers, indicating the decade of the 1960s), but working in the 1970s via his company, *Sewentig* (Seventy) as his psychological insight and cinematic nuance systematically interrogated the Afrikaner apartheid psyche via expressionism and other stylistic forms (Botha 2006).

Hees (1993) identifies seemingly incompatible paradigms within which progressive sections within the Afrikaner academy approach modernity. These include the inability of the model to balance socialism – whether Afrikaner, pastoral, or post-apartheid – with aesthetic concerns deriving from previous moments experienced elsewhere (UK, Soviet Union or Third World), contradictions that derive from Fourie's correspondence theory. As such, the book draws in an idiosyncratic way from the anti-liberal, anti-humanist, economistic moment centred on a Marxist analysis of the South African Communist Party (SACP) (see, Wolpe 1972), as read through and applied in *The Cinema of Apartheid*. Unlike CCT, the early SACP strand had marginalised discussion on issues of culture and resistance and vested agency in the working class. Classical Marxism, which had some affinity with the Freedom Charter, contested this strand. Appropriations of Gramsci in 1970s South Africa provided 'a particularly receptive field for the application of a humanism that stressed the possibilities rather than the impossibilities of political will' (Muller and Tomaselli 1990, 312).

Botha's (2012) *South African Cinema 1896–2010* differs substantially from Jacqueline Maingard's (2007) *South African National Cinema*. He describes the different historical periods while Maingard analyses, through case studies, films that characterise national identity in terms of modernity. She discusses early black films such as *Jim comes to Joburg* (also known as *Joburg Jim*) and she critically comments on filmic monuments to the Afrikaner *volk* like *They Built a Nation* (1938) and *'n Nasie Hou Koers* (1940).

Leon van Nierop's (2016) book, based on kykNet's TV series, *Daar Doer in die Fliek* [Far Away in the Movies] (2016), provides rich descriptions of Afrikaans genre cinema that spans the same time period as does this chapter, sourcing from his archive of film criticism whilst packaging a century's worth of history in a palatable way for leisure readers. His descriptive history, however, elides discussion of modernity, struggle or liberation, which I imported in my analysis of the TV series (Tomaselli 2015).

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20 For more on South African women directors, see Tomaselli and Annecke (1990) and Jansen van Vuuren (2022).

Conclusion

For Masilela, NAM contributed to film culture by propagating modernity. NAM writings and actions were extraordinarily influential, resilient and withstood the test of time. By reframing South African film studies through the multiple lenses provided by different individuals embraced by NAM, one can rethink cinematic history. NAM had emerged as a loose movement of intellectuals who were not only subjects of an early modernity, but who were actually and actively, trying to shape it, in terms of their respective class, racial, ethnic, language and other intersecting determinations. As an informal intellectual trajectory of like-minded individuals, they responded to modernising conditions not of their own making. In contrast, though CCT had opposed modernity it was rearticulated into the new urbanising conjuncture by Tommie Meyer, NAM triumphed in published studies and was regenerated under the guise of Thabo Mbeki's African Renaissance movement.

Previously hidden trajectories within filmmaking would now include the films made from Gordimer's short stories, Athol Fugard's plays and André Brink's novels, and the 1990s M-Net New Directions series produced by Green which birthed young directors like Ntshaveni wa Luruli and producers like Bongiwe Selane. As such, now organic intellectuals who were key members of the industry like Plaatje, Ngakane, Ken Gampu and perhaps even Simon Sabela (whose activism remains to be studied) and Donald Swanson of *Joburg Jim* fame can be added to NAM (see Modisane 2013). This enables us to now also study South African cinema in terms of intellectual movements and not just in terms of race, class and capital. That is, the study of form is now also included in the mix.

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08

The Foxy Five: Woke Politics and Participatory Culture

Dylan Valley

> The filmmaker who subscribes to this new poetics should not have personal self-realisation as his object. He should place his role as revolutionary or aspiring revolutionary above all else. (Garcìa Espinosa 1983, 39)

The web-series as an online televisual form is a relatively new genre in the history of moving picture forms, and as such little scholarship exists on the topic. The Do-It-Yourself nature of web-series – in conjunction with the ongoing revolution in high definition (HD) video technology – offers a level of creative and political freedom to filmmakers which is as yet unprecedented. Crowd-funding, low production costs and self-distribution online have meant that the barriers to entry for creating a web-series are much lower than that of traditional film and television (Christian 2011, 3).

Essentially this signals a shift in the power dynamics between amateur and professional filmmakers, as well as in the power of industry gatekeepers. This has implications on the mobility of marginalised voices in industries that are not designed to allow these voices to flourish. In the context of the USA, the comedy web-series *The Misadventures of Awkward Black Girl* (2011) proved that the stereotypical and marginal representations of African-American women offered by traditional television were insufficient. The viral internet success of this web-series resulted in cable network Home Box Office (HBO) commissioning a version of the show called *Insecure*, which took *Awkward Black Girl* creator Issa Rae from internet celebrity to award-winning television doyenne (Liao 2017).

In South Africa, a web-series by Jabu Nadia Newman called *The Foxy Five* has tapped into the zeitgeist of recent South African student politics, namely fallism. Central to the ethos of the student movement were decolonisation and intersectionality. In colloquial terms, we can call this *woke* politics. This web-series, while highlighting the particularities of the fallist movement, also embodies what media scholar Henry Jenkins (2006) refers to as 'convergence culture' – where old and new media collide. As a work of fandom, the series heavily references the blaxploitation genre, specifically the Pam Grier vehicle *Foxy Brown* (1974). In this chapter I argue that YouTube as a distribution platform and the amorphous nature of web-series as an online cinematic/ televisual form affords filmmakers like Newman a level of freedom that is not experienced in traditional film and television. I argue that this freedom allows for an open-ended creative approach as well as the inclusion of a more radical politics that would not normally be found in film or television.

On 12 June 2018, I conducted a telephonic interview with a set of prepared questions for Newman, the creator of *The Foxy Five*. I wanted to understand her creative process and goals in making *The Foxy Five* and compare it with my own textual analysis of her web-series. In her interview we spoke about her influences, her political impetus, and her non-hierarchical and unconventional (in film and television terms) methods of working with her cast and crew.

In this chapter I also contrast *The Foxy Five*'s radical feminism with the Ghanaian web-series *An African City* (2014), a work with similar themes, yet diametrically opposed to Newman's web-series in terms of politics. I will explore the revolutionary possibilities as well as the commercial limitations of the web-series as a new serialised televisual form on the continent. Are we on the eve of a new tomorrow, and what will that look like?

An intersectional web-series

When colonialist Cecil John Rhodes's statue was removed from its prominent position at the University of Cape Town, Jabu Nadia Newman was in the crowd cheering as the cranes lifted the large figure onto the getaway van. Newman was part of the movement that led to the statue being removed – #RhodesMustFall, a grassroots student protest movement that called for the decolonisation of higher education in South Africa. In a manner similar to the trajectory of the Arab Spring, and largely via social media, #RhodesMustFall quickly snowballed into #FeesMustFall, a nationwide protest movement that called for quality, decolonised higher education and the scrapping of university fees for people who cannot afford them. While she was skeptical of mainstream feminism and felt alienated from it, it was during the #RhodesMustFall protests that Newman was introduced to intersectional feminism.

> I saw how a lot of the black radical feminists and trans and queer bodies who were leading the protests were talking about this thing called intersectionality which they wanted to bring into the protest, as there needed to be all different types of voices heard when we were talking about decolonisation at university … the reason why a lot of black women couldn't claim to be feminists is that it was a Western term, relating to what white women needed, instead of relating to what black women or what black queer individuals needed right now. (Newman 2018)

The term 'intersectionality' was first introduced to feminist theory in America in 1989 by Kimberlé Crenshaw in her paper 'Demarginalising the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Policies'. In this paper Crenshaw states that the subordination of black women cannot be understood in a single-axis, top-down framework, and that different forms of oppression are connected. Black women experience discrimination not separately as racism or sexism but rather at the intersection of race and gender. Crenshaw (1989, 140) states that:

> Black women are sometimes excluded from feminist theory and antiracist policy discourse because both are predicated on a discrete set of experiences that often does not accurately reflect the interaction of race and gender. These problems of exclusion cannot be solved simply by including black women.

The Foxy Five has been described as an intersectional web series or a web series about intersectionality (Rasool 2017). In my telephone interview with her, Newman said that she wanted to illustrate what intersectional feminism was, and she wanted to explore what that would look like on screen.

Her series follows five young women as they start a radical feminist organisation. The group is introduced as five different archetypes: the sexually liberated gender activist, the hippie, the bookworm, the black radical and the diplomat. The first episode opens at the University of Cape Town under the shadow of Jameson Hall, placed at the foot of Devil's Peak, one of the summits of the Table Mountain range. Jameson Hall was named after Leander Starr Jameson, a former prime minister of the Cape Colony and a contemporary of Cecil John Rhodes. Both were implicated in the infamous Jameson Raid, a rogue military attack on Kruger's Transvaal government (Rudell 2013, 101). This site became the centre of the student protests where Rhodes's statue fell (Jameson Hall has since been renamed Sarah Baartman Hall after the Khoe woman who was infamously exhibited as a human freak in Europe).

In the opening scene, the five women sing a remixed military call-and-response tune with the lyrics: *Women's rights we will fight for/even if we go to*

war. Black Beauty, the radical, interrupts: 'Wait – I'm not willing to go to war for white women, hey! Sorrrry!' This kicks off a robust debate around what the focus of their group should be. They can't seem to agree on a unified programme and, as things start to heat up, the (aptly named) Unity Bond summons the women to the headquarters to thrash things out. It is here that the disagreements continue and as Unity breaks the fourth wall and looks directly into the camera (reminiscent of another online video form, vlogging) she pushes them to consider intersectionality as a framework for working from a sense of solidarity. After a dance scene at a nightclub followed by a dream sequence where queer rapper Dope St Jude makes a cameo as a heavenly apparition, the group stage a protest on the gentrifying streets of Woodstock, Cape Town.

The Foxy Five mobilises the concept of intersectionality firstly by naming it as such, and secondly by centring the struggles of black women in the show. Black Beauty's statement might seem like a radical provocation; however, it serves the role of highlighting the particular struggles of black women as distinct from those of white women. Newman is acknowledging here that the liberation of women needs to incorporate an understanding of racism to be truly emancipatory. While Newman makes this distinction, she is also careful to not present the experiences of black women as monolithic, and we see this in the disagreements between the group members, most notably the hippie Prolly Plebs wanting the group to down their toy guns as they are reminiscent of 'death and doom and destruction'. In episode four, both Unity Bond and Prolly Plebs are looking for a place to rent in Cape Town but are treated with suspicion by white landlords (this is a widely experienced issue for black people in affluent and gentrifying Cape Town neighbourhoods). Prolly finds a place easily while Unity Bond struggles to even arrange a viewing. This opens up a discussion around light skin privilege and 'colouredness' in South Africa, which relates to the perceived racial identity of Prolly Plebs. She decides to hide the ease with which she finds a place to rent, and the revelation of this lie later down the line leads to a crisis in her friendship with Unity.

While the first two episodes feel celebratory and self-affirming, the series is also self-aware and even self-critical, most notably in the fourth episode, 'Femme Fatale and Lebo'. A trans character, Lebo (played by Mlingani Matiwane), is introduced as a sort of sixth member ofThe Foxy Five. Lebo pops up into frame as the group are waking up from a drunken night out. At first their inclusion may seem to be a tokenised form of representation; however, I read this as Newman furthering the intersectional conversation and turning the show's critique on itself. In this episode Lebo and the non-binary pansexual character Femme Fatale go on a date where Femme misreads all the cues. She begins by commenting on Lebo's beauty and says, 'You look more like a woman than me!' Lebo has a violent interaction with a bouncer at a nightclub (a disagreement around who qualifies for entrance at Ladies' Night) and later Femme makes an



Figure 8.1. Opening scene from *The Foxy Five*. The women walk against the backdrop of what was Jameson Hall, named for Rhodes's associate, Leander Starr Jameson. After #RhodesMustFall the university renamed it Sarah Baartman Hall.

unprovoked sexual advance on Lebo. This builds up to a biting monologue at the end of the episode where Lebo educates Femme on how to treat a trans person on a date. Lebo then also proceeds to lambast the Foxy Five and calls their group a 'playhouse.' This can be read as a critique of the show itself – aiming to further intersectional feminism but only for the screen and not on the ground. Also, Lebo's comment makes it clear that an intersectional web-series is incomplete without exploring trans lives, and that the inclusion of a trans narrative in one episode is not enough.

> In the stage of writing that episode it was a chance for us as The Foxy Five to understand and reflect and reconsider all the ideas that we had. It was really difficult but really important for us to engage with someone who was completely directing them and us … it was a culmination of the way they (Lebo) were feeling over the past few days of filming due to all the mistakes we made. There was a lot of misgendering on set. (Newman 2018)

The inclusion of this scene is a bold move by Newman, and laid bare the shortcomings of her cast and crew. The actor that played Lebo Mlingani Matiwane, an activist in their own right, wrote this monologue after a long day of shooting on the episode, where they had felt completely flustered at the lack of understanding

of the trans experience on set. This episode serves as a disruptive intervention on the part of Lebo, and in my opinion, *The Foxy Five* is much stronger because of it, as this monologue broadened the scope of the web-series in representation and praxis.

Wokeness and participatory culture

The genesis of this web-series came about as a result of student activists converging during #RhodesMustFall. Together and under the helm of Newman, they conceived of an intersectional web-series where they would play fictionalised versions of themselves. This workshopped process, in conjunction with the implementation of feedback from the show's fans, can be seen as emblematic of participatory culture. Media scholar and internet culture guru Henry Jenkins (2006) defines participatory culture as one where the consumers of that culture are actively invited to take part and co-create that culture.

YouTube acts as a site of participatory culture in the way that it blurs the line between producers and consumers. It encourages amateur video production and dialogue via its comments features; and its social media integration allows for the ability to embed on any platform. YouTube is not in the business of content creation but rather the hosting and sharing of content (although this is changing – YouTube has already created its own original premium content much like the streaming platform Netflix). It is the shareability of the content that took a web-series like *The Misadventures of Awkward Black Girl* from a home-made video experiment to a cultural phenomenon.

This focus on co-creation is also a reflection and echo of the #RhodesMustFall movement, where Newman cut her teeth politically. This was essentially a grassroots student-led protest movement that operated within a decentralised leadership structure. A slogan from the #FeesMustFall campaign stated: 'We are not leaderless, we are leaderful.' This spoke to the collective praxis of the student movement – no one is leading but everyone is leading. Of course, gradually this played out somewhat differently – women and LGBTIQ+ leaders were sidelined and cisgender heterosexual men took centre stage (Collison 2016). While many felt the movement had lost its intersectional focus, this is emblematic of broader problems in a patriarchal society. The initial horizontal structure of #FeesMustFall was in a sense a reaction to these hegemonic forces. Similarly, in the creation of the *The Foxy Five*, Jabu Newman allowed for the cast to shape the narrative trajectory (Newman 2018), and this approach can be felt through the amorphous nature of the series.

In defence of the web-series: An imperfect cinema

The Femme Fatale and Lebo episode of *The Foxy Five* signals a shift in tone and



Figure 8.2. Screenshot. Lebo lectures *Foxy Five*.

format of the web-series. The first three episodes seemed to get into a rhythm of moving between group discussion and character backstory. Every member of the five would get their turn to be the protagonist of an episode, where their character gets to be unpacked and explored more deeply. In Lebo's disruption of this rhythm, effectively Femme Fatale becomes a villain and the tone of the series shifts to something more self-critical and contemplative. The leader of the group, Unity Bond, does not get her own episode but there is a season finale where the group appears to fracture and dismantle. The characterisations in this episode are akin to Lena Dunham's *Girls*, where every character's flaws are worn on their sleeves.

The Lebo episode signifies a shift to something more cinematic – steadicam shots through a convenience shop, a well-crafted nightclub scene, disembodied flashbacks with the sound removed. This is a clear difference from long scenes of discussion and arguments in the first episode, where at times it is hard to follow the content as the five main characters are shouting over each other. This is the perfect audio-visual manifestation of the making of a collaborative moving image; they are thrashing out what exactly this thing they are doing is. To me this is not a mistake but rather one of the advantages of the web-series: the filmmaker has the opportunity to reveal and share their process publicly.

It is this notion of imperfection that is at the heart of the web-series, and I would argue a cornerstone of this televisual form. In shooting the first episode of *The Misadventures of Awkward Black Girl*, Issa Rae enlisted her closest

(non-filmmaker) friends and literally trained them to use camera equipment. The result is a low-budget work, in some way resembling Hito Steyerl's 'poor image' (Steyerl 2009), whose low-fi-ness gives an added value to its fresh and offbeat humour. In the same way that a shaky handheld camera can make a documentary seem more authentic, the imperfection of a web-series can make it seem more authentic.

A web-series like *The Foxy Five* is reminiscent of Cuban filmmaker Julio Garcia Espinosa's (1983) concept of an imperfect cinema – where commercial imperatives are suppressed in favour of artistic integrity and revolutionary goals. Garcia Espinosa argues that the need for perfection in cinema is reactionary and based on the desire for films to serve the flows of capital. He predicted a future where advancements in video technology would mean that filmmaking would no longer be the reserve of elites, and that movie theatres would become superfluous. Garcìa Espinosa writes:

> What happens then is not only an act of social justice – the possibility for everyone to make films – but also a fact of extreme importance for artistic culture: the possibility of recovering, without any kinds of complexes or guilt feelings, the true meaning of artistic activity. Then we will be able to understand that art is one of mankind's 'impartial' or 'uncommitted' activities [via actívidad desinteresada]. (Garcìa Espinosa 1983, 29)

In making *The Foxy Five*, Jabu Newman had no commercial goals in mind, her only commercial aim was to make enough money for the project to be self-sustaining (Newman 2018). It can be argued that *The Foxy Five* is a radical film project, an imperfect work that has no aspirations of cinematic perfection.

> When I started [the web-series] I was in my second year of film studies and very naive … I had never studied genre or understood the different tropes of genre. I knew I wanted to make something that was almost like a documentary but also fictional, but also funny, but also in a world where you were not really sure what time or place you were in … I knew that because the issues were so real and were so like, happening right now in this moment, I wanted to make it as stylised as possible so that it didn't feel like a documentary, so that the actors could also feel comfortable to act out these things that were so real in their world … that this isn't them reliving that thing … I wanted them to be more critical of themselves and to be self-aware, and also to make fun of themselves in a way. I didn't want to create these perfect characters, these perfect five black women who were so woke or whatever, but rather these are women who are caught in this social cycle or social revolution and are learning these things for themselves as well. (Newman 2018)

Newman also says in the interview that she is not intending to turn *The Foxy Five* into a traditional television show – in doing so she fears that the politics of the show may need to be 'watered down' (Newman 2018) for a mainstream audience. This is a reasonable concern – South Africa's public broadcaster is notoriously conservative and wary of projects that push the envelope. The major private media corporations are informed only by commercial imperatives, and in the case of major player Multichoice, are owned by companies like Naspers, who have their genesis firmly rooted in Afrikaner nationalism. It is no wonder then that Newman is concerned that by having traditional gatekeepers as stakeholders in her project, she would be pushed to create a more polished and, in her view, therefore a more sterile piece of work. She has instead used the authenticity of the show to project herself as an artist, doing select screenings of the series in Europe and exhibiting as a video artist in a gallery. Newman is not completely impervious to commercial imperatives, however, and has featured in an online campaign for mobile telecommunications giant Vodacom, where she speaks about the making of *The Foxy Five*.

Fandom, anti-fandom and blaxploitation

In his journal article 'Fandom as Industrial Response: Producing Identity In an Independent Web Series', Aymar Jean Christian (2011) uses the web-series *The Real Girl's Guide to Everything Else* (2010) as an entry point to a discussion around the possibilities and limitations of the web-series as a site for challenging hegemonic representations. The web-series also has a role to play in the centring of marginal representations, particularly with regards to women of colour and LGBTIQ+ characters. He also analyses this web-series as a work of both fandom and anti-fandom, and looks at the commercial imperatives and possibilities of a web-series. I will unpack this with regard to *The Real Girl's Guide* as well as *The Foxy Five*.

The Real Girl's Guide to Everything Else is an American web-series created by Carmen Elena Mitchell and Reena Dutt in 2010, and centres on a Lebanese lesbian writer named Rasha whose passion is writing long-form anthro-journalism. Her publisher, however, is pushing her to write romantic chick lit books. Her friends persuade her to do the chick lit book and to use the proceeds to write the book she wants. She agrees, and is then coached to go undercover as a heterosexual woman on a series of dates administered via an online portal.

The series heavily references the cable television network HBO series *Sex and the City*, which was broadcast from 1998 to 2004. *Sex and the City*'s candid approach to female sexuality and its edgy writing made it a ground-breaking and highly successful television series. *The Real Girl's Guide* opens with a scene of the four women characters talking over brunch, which partially thanks to *Sex and the City* has become somewhat of a staple in modern television (Christian 2011, 1). In

this scene, Rasha laments that her publisher is pushing her in a direction she does not want, and seems to think that there is an untapped market for 'Middle Eastern fashionistas'. Her friend Vanna responds, 'kind of like *Sex and the City* for Brown Girls'. The web-series makes repeated reference to the HBO show in subsequent episodes, from the Latin jazz of the opening sequence (the sequence of images, music and titles traditionally used in television to open every episode of a series to provide a sense of identity to a serialised programme) to name-dropping the show, even borrowing the character name Mr Big. In this way, this web-series can be seen as a work of fandom – a fan-made response to a popular media text. While the admiration for the television series is clear, the web-series came about as a negative response to the two *Sex and the City* feature films (as opposed to the television series), which the creators Elena Mitchell and Reena Dutt found to be extremely disappointing, particularly with regards to the lack of representations of people of colour (Oscar-winning African American performer Jennifer Hudson was cast in a supporting, stereotypical role) as well as an overwhelming sense of materialism (Christian 2011, 7). Mitchell (who is bisexual) and Dutt (who is Indian American) sought to reimagine *Sex and the City* with themselves and people who inhabit their world at the centre. They used the format of the web-series to address what they saw as a representational imbalance (Christian 2011, 19). In this way, the web-series is also a work of anti-fandom (Christian 2011, 10).

At the time of creating *The Foxy Five*, Jabu Newman was not only a student activist within the #RhodesMustFall movement – she was also watching American blaxploitation films from the 1970s. Surprised by the revolutionary characters and strong black female leads, such as Pam Grier's *Foxy Brown*, she felt that there was a lack of this kind of representation in contemporary television and cinema. In creating *The Foxy Five*, she was aiming to pay homage to this era.

> I felt like all the films that I had watched, like *Foxy Brown* and *Women in Cages* and all that blaxploitation shit, I couldn't believe that these were the types of films that black individuals were doing in the 70s and were so dope. And I also recognised how much those types of films influenced famous directors now and how they're not giving credit to the fact that they're stealing from that time and from that style that's so original and so authentic and so black. (Newman 2018)

The overt nod to *Foxy Brown* is of course in the title of Newman's web-series, as well as in the aesthetics and characterisations, particularly the character of black Beauty. In the second episode she moonlights as a vigilante superhero in her neighbourhood, and saves a sex worker from an abusive white man who she beats up in an alleyway (the man ends up being the principal of her little

brother's school, who she has a meeting with the next day). Newman says in our interview that seeing Pam Grier physically fight white men in her films was revolutionary to her, and a cathartic experience for a black woman growing up in post-apartheid Cape Town, with its stagnant racial politics.

We also see the nod to the blaxploitation era in *The Foxy Five* through the styling of the characters (who wear vintage fur coats and knee-high boots) and the funk music which opens each episode. In this way Newman is making the link between current fallist student activism in 2015 and past black revolutionary movements, in a similar way to how the fallist movement mobilised anti-apartheid struggle songs to speak about the current struggle of black South Africans, namely massive economic inequality and lack of access to opportunity. In her talk at the 2016 Ruth First Memorial Lecture, scholar and activist Leigh-Anne Naidoo described the fallist movement as 'time travellers' (Naidoo 2016).

The Foxy Five also mobilises the concept of play and imagination, as *The Real Girl's Guide* does, although in very different ways, and with different goals. *The Real Girl's Guide* sought to reimagine *Sex and the City* as a show that 'reflected the sexual and racial diversity of "real" women' (Christian 2011, 4). *The Real Girl's Guide* is also intended as a cultural product which sought to transform the film and television industry 'from the outside in' (Christian 2011, 9) and address inadequacies with regards to gender and race. As Christian notes, the series is not anti-capitalist and was created by industry professionals who sought to create a product that harnessed the *Sex and the City* reference point but to more progressive ends: 'What marks *The Real Girl's Guide* as a slight departure from the transformative works more often studied is that it is pitched not only to a community of like-minded fans but also to the industry of Hollywood, (potential) advertisers, and the media as a product created by a group of marginalised workers leveraging convergence culture for their purposes' (Christian 2011, 2). By contrast, *The Foxy Five* as a radical black feminist text does not seek to assimilate into the television industry. Its aim is rather to use YouTube and social media to further the goals of intersectional feminism as experienced in the fallist movement, while at the same time entertaining its viewers.

An African web-series

Another web-series that has named *Sex and the City* as a main reference is the Ghanaian *An African City* (2014). The web-series was created by Nicole Amarteifio, a young returnee Ghanaian woman who spent much of her life growing up in London and New York after her parents decided to leave Ghana due to 'a series of political coups' (Rao 2016). Despite growing up abroad, Amarteifio had always considered Ghana to be her home. She completed a Master's in Corporate Communication at Georgetown University in the USA

and later took a job at the World Bank, eventually moving back to Ghana and working for the bank remotely.

In an interview with *Marie Claire* magazine she speaks about how the seed for the web-series was planted: 'She remembered when she had told a professor at Georgetown about her idea for someone, somewhere, to translate *Sex and the City* in a Ghanaian context. The professor had told her to be that someone and "just start writing", she recalls' (Rao 2016). In the true spirit of web-series creation, Amarteifio decided to write from her own experiences as a returnee to Africa. All of the characters in her web-series, while varying in personality, reflect this experience. While her writing about her own experiences adds a level of authenticity to *An African City*, this also means that the local Ghanaian experience feels somewhat removed from the reality depicted in the show.

An African City also follows five women characters as in *The Foxy Five*. However, the political projects of the two web-series are somewhat different. *An African City* seeks to liberate the sexuality of African women and to offer an alternative to common representations of African women in the West. *The Foxy Five* engages with sexual liberation as well, particularly in relation to the pansexual Femme Fatale character. This is significant because of the large gaps in the representation of African women in global media, for which the web-series can be a site for an antidote to correct industry misrepresentation. This being said, it is important to note that *An African City* focuses on middle- to upper-class women in Ghana, some of whom have generational wealth and political connections. In this way the series has a disconnect to experiences of the majority of Ghanaians and represents an elitist feminism where the intersectionality of race and sex fails to include class (Ochieng 2016).

However, it is also important to note that much like *The Real Girl's Guide, An African City* is a product meant to be sold and it leverages its *Sex and the City* references in order to hook audiences' attention. It was eventually screened on The Africa Channel in the US and on the streaming platform VHX (Rao 2016). Amarteifio is currently developing a pilot with Netflix, also set in Ghana. By contrast, *The Foxy Five* as a work of fandom was not conceived of as a product but rather a project, and does not necessarily mobilise its fan references in order to leverage views and audiences (probably not many people in Newman's age group have heard of *Foxy Brown*). Newman's web project is a political one that is more in the spirit of Third Cinema than glossy television, however, both of these worlds converge in *The Foxy Five*.

Participatory culture and democratisation

The internet has been said to democratise media creation and consumption, in the sense that anyone can make a film today using increasingly accessible digital film technology. This is true to an extent. However, in a country like South Africa,

the majority of the population do not have access to fibre or broadband internet, despite the majority of people having access to smartphones. A laptop and editing software are also a bit harder to come by. As Jean Burgess and Joshua Green write in their book *YouTube: Online Video and Participatory Culture,* while the barriers to entry might be lower, the true markers of success for a filmmaker using new media video tools still lie within the realms of traditional media: 'the marker of success for these new forms, paradoxically, is measured not only by their online popularity but by their subsequent ability to pass through the gate-keeping mechanisms of old media – the recording contract, the film festival, the television pilot, the advertising deal' (Burgess and Green 2009, 24).

This was definitely the case with the trajectory of *The Misadventure of Awkward Black Girl,* from web-series to *New York Times* best-seller's list (for a book of the same name) to HBO series and a multitude of awards (and cameo appearances in videos of some of the biggest rap artists in the US). However, this is not necessarily the goal for all web-series. YouTube as a site of participatory culture also allows for the exploration and dissemination of ideas, and not only for finished products. While Newman has not made any money directly from *The Foxy Five*, the attention and visibility which the series has afforded her as a creator/director/artist has arguably more value than a standard paycheck.

Conclusion

Unlike many web-series today, *The Foxy Five* is not a pilot for a traditional television show and will not make the transition to the mainstream in the way that *The Misadventures of Awkward Black Girl* has done. This web-series is an end in itself. Newman mentioned in our interview that there will not be any more *Foxy Five* episodes, nor will there be a transition of the series to television (Newman 2018). She does, however, plan to continue to work with her *Foxy Five* collaborators, and create work in the spirit of *The Foxy Five.* As is evident from this web-series, YouTube and digital video technologies lower the barriers to entry for filmmakers and allow for new methodologies. Filmmakers no longer have to spend years raising the money for a perfect cinema experience, but can bring the audience along on an imperfect but exciting journey. However, for YouTube's engagement with participatory culture to be truly democratic, the accessibility of the tools of creation in places like South Africa needs to increase.

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09

Cinemas of Dis/agreement: Contemporary Afrikaner Dramas

Emelia Steenekamp

For nearly two decades after the South African transition to electoral democracy, local cinema continued to show only negligible attempts at political rupture. What dominated film output was, instead, a substantial wave of flagrantly escapist works from the white Afrikaner community. Chris Broodryk (2016, 1) refers to these films as 'politically impotent' in their abject refusal to engage with local contexts, whereas Adriaan Steyn (2016, 105), drawing on German cultural philosopher Theodor Adorno, supposes that the Afrikaans film industry has been 'rotating on the same spot'. These texts often present in the form of slapstick comedies of 'scatological excess' (Broodryk 2016, 6) focused on narratives of 'white male actualisation' (Broodryk 2016, 179).

Although they were commercially successful, many critics and viewers responded to these Afrikaner comedies with disdain and embarrassment (Van Nierop 2016, 241–242), as the films painted a negative and backward picture of the Afrikaner subject. From the 2010s onwards, however, a cinema emerges that seeks to counter these tropes, in the form of contemplative Afrikaans dramas. These works claim an active attempt at exploring the South African condition through narratives of hardship and rumination. They contain narrative events that seemingly centre on themes such as racial discord and poverty. Upon examination, however, there appears to be a disjointed relationship between the intentions of the filmmakers, the mechanics of these films and the discourse surrounding them. I would like to explore these intersections in order to unpack the contradictions and paradoxes of two texts, *Sink* (Innes 2015) and *Krotoa*

(Durrant 2017). I maintain that these paradoxes are indicative of the fact that neither of the films in question partakes in actual political dialogue.

Sink, through an aesthetic vaguely reminiscent of European arthouse, deals with the relationship between Rachel, a domestic worker, and her employers, whereas *Krotoa* tells of the eponymous Khoi translator who mediated the business of the Dutch settlers and the indigenous Khoi population in the 1650s and 1660s. Unlike the impotent comedies, set in lily-white fantasy worlds that are blatantly disconnected from our own, these two films both posit situations of overtly unequal power relations that are gendered and racialised.

The sensible order

Despite this subject matter, however, my thesis about these two texts is that ultimately, they are de-political, aporetic films in that they actively and fervently undo their potential politics.[1] I maintain that the protagonists on which they claim to base their narratives are in fact mere smokescreens for narratives centred on white men. The films both partake in an emulation of politics, but neither of them does anything to disrupt the aesthetic or political hierarchies in which they embed themselves. Rather, these hierarchies are solidified. Here, French philosopher Jacques Rancière's rendering of political motions in art is useful to us because his figuration does not require of art to *teach* a certain political understanding. Instead, it looks at how art can both introduce new subjectivities, and disrupt dominant ones. Rancière writes that, 'what is common, is sensation' (Rancière 2009, 56) and that, between one another, we craft a sensory fabric consisting of sense data from which we all draw and to which we relate all our experiences. This fabric of senses, the *sensible order*, is then a realm in which certain sensuous realities are collectively visible/available, and from which others, in turn, are excluded (Rancière 2006, 85).[2]

Rancière's conception of politics provides a structure for my argument that *Krotoa* and *Sink* are films that firmly maintain the presumed equilibrium of what he calls *consensus*, a state in which the current configuration of the sensible remains unchallenged. Consensus therefore confines the possibilities of sensuous contact within certain realities. Sights, sounds and sensations are channelled according to a framework, and a notion of a single 'reality to which everything must be related' (Rancière 2010, 44). *Politics*, however, are what occurs when such a framework, representative of the sensible order, is disrupted.

According to this figuration, political art works through feeling and experience

1 This chapter forms part of a larger study conducted at the University of Cape Town.
2 'Sensible' in the French sense referring to sensitivity/matters of the senses.

to redistribute prevailing systems of meaning and signification. Politics are only politics when they are truly disruptive. Political disruption is often precluded, however, by what Rancière calls the *police order*, an order of bodies and mechanisms that work to consent to the prevailing order. In art, the police order maintains consensus by entrenching systems of meaning, signification and experience. It ensures the positioning of certain individuals within certain occupations, times and spaces, 'pinning … specific "bodies" … to specific ways of being, seeing and saying' (Rancière 2010, 139). Functioning to unpin these bodies, the politics of art works in contradistinction to the police: 'as the construction of sensible landscapes and the formation of modes of seeing that deconstruct consensus while-forging new possibilities and capacities' (Rancière 2017, 246).

Sink: The way the world works

Sink tells the story of a white Afrikaans couple, Michelle and Chris, living in Johannesburg with their Mozambican domestic worker, Rachel, and Rachel's five-year-old daughter, Maia. On the same day that Michelle learns that she is pregnant, Maia drowns in the wealthy couple's pool, while under Michelle's care. The film chronicles the emotional and interrelational processes the three adults go through after Maia's death up until the birth of Michelle's baby. The plot is chronicled through a parallel structure in which flashbacks slowly build up to the moment of Maia's drowning, and contemporary scenes build up to the birth of Michelle's child. Maia's negligent death is a tragedy that has the potential of suspending all hierarchical structures in place, and yet this event is explained away before it even occurs. In the thorough and insistent introduction to the desires and movements of the Jordaans' lives, an explanation is offered: 'It was an accident,' Chris repeats to Michelle after the funeral, as if to say: this is just the way the world works.

The opening scene of *Sink* is devoted to displaying the position of each character involved. The film starts off on a black screen, over which we hear Chris saying, 'Rachel, I know this is a conversation that we've all been avoiding, but it's one that we need to have.' As Chris reaches the second clause of this line, there is a cut to a wide profile shot of three people sitting at a table, Chris and Michelle on one side, and Rachel opposite them. The camera moves in as Chris states that, given 'what happened' (as an audience we do not know what he is referring to at this point), they would understand if Rachel would not want to work for them any more. Rachel immediately states, 'I'll stay.' A second or so after this affirmation there is a cut to a profile shot of Michelle and Chris who both look taken aback. It is a decisively steered introduction to the film. It sets up the two parties involved, Rachel as the servant, and the Jordaans as the employers. Thus, it carefully ensures that we understand the position of each respective character. Chris, who has by far the most lines in the

scene, is clearly at the helm. Once it has been confirmed that Rachel will keep working for the Jordaans, she attempts to pick up the tea tray from the table, but is interrupted by Michelle, who utters her first line, 'Don't worry, I'll do that.' This interaction signals the first instance of the leitmotif of the two women's relationship around domestic chores, power and redemption. The moment also aligns them both with the domestic, whereas Chris in his overseeing of their interactions, is shown to be an active and uncompromised agent. Aside from introducing a motif and gendering the setting, this moment has a further implication. It is a motion intended by Rachel that is co-opted by Michelle. This conflation between the roles, positions and experiences of the two women is a prominent strategy that is to escalate as the film continues, and culminates at the climax of the film, in which scenes from Maia's death are intercut with Michelle going into labour. Right before Michelle's water breaks, she drops a sugar bowl and in Rachel's absence has to vacuum the shards, performing a domestic chore. In the flashback to the day of Maia's death, Rachel arrives back at the Jordaans' house to find an ambulance at the gate. When she realises that Maia has drowned, she cries out mournfully. Director Brett Michael Innes cuts back to the present time, and Rachel's cries about Maia's death fade into Michelle's cries of labour.

At the moment in question, Michelle is trapped. Due to a big storm, the house is without electricity and, whilst nearly keeling over from contractions, Michelle cannot open the electric security gate. Rachel, noticing the commotion outside, eventually approaches Michelle to assist with the birthing, which takes place in the driveway amid the pouring rain. The birth is intercut with flashback scenes of paramedics trying to resuscitate Maia amid Rachel's screams. The death of Rachel's child is subsumed by the birth of Michelle's; Rachel's loss is morphed into Michelle's gain. The fusion of Rachel's anguish and Michelle's birth-giving explicitly happens on an affective level through the literal aural fade of one set of screams (Rachel's) into another (Michelle's).

This montage seems to function as part of an attempt to link the subjectivities of the two women, potentially a disruptive moment. The full implication, however, is that Rachel's subjectivity is obscured to the benefit of Michelle's, bringing to mind the world's vast history of race and class and the displacement of poor people of colour by rich white people. The film does not challenge this displacement; it repeats it. The editing renders two women's screams from different time periods indistinguishable. But, only one set of screams remains after the film's final cut back to the past. The affective manifestation of Rachel's suffering is in this way treated as a current that has to carry Michelle's experience. Rachel's loss is identified with in terms of a dramatic occurrence, but all its pathos is transposed onto Michelle's lifeworld. In this way, a cumbersome cinematic symbol of catharsis effectively becomes a crude erasure of someone's lifeworld, turning Rachel's experience of loss into a site of identification for Michelle.

From the fusion of Rachel's and Michelle's experience is yielded the true apotheosis of the film – an exchange that happens between the lives of two children. As Rachel is helping Michelle in labour, she tells her 'I need you to breathe' and Innes cuts to the scene of paramedics trying to resuscitate Maia, also hoping for a breath. Then, as if from Maia's ashes, Michelle's child is born. As soon as the birth has taken place, the film no longer contains any cut backs to the time of Maia. It is as if this event resolves Maia's death, declaring a seemingly self-explanatory state of redemption and resolution. Thus, any potential for engagement with South African or global inequities is replaced by the message that all is well, that all can be overcome, or perhaps with the ominous police platitude, 'Move along! There's nothing to see [here]' (Rancière 2017, 239).

It is pertinent to note that the filmmakers of *Sink* expressly wanted, as director Brett Michael Innes declared in June 2016, to join 'the national conversation that is happening in South Africa on so many levels' (SABC Digital News 2016). As seems to be the trend in interviews with the filmmakers of *Sink*, Innes does not tell us anything about what he imagines the content of this conversation to be, merely that something is afoot. In interviews, themes like 'loss' and 'grief' are repeatedly mentioned by the filmmakers, but words like 'race', 'gender' or 'history' are not ever heard. Through these articulations, a universal reach, a reach for sweeping emotional relevance (loss, grief, redemption), is openly stated. Yet the locality from which this reach for the universal is made, a locality involving the reality of race labour in South Africa, remains vaguely imaged.

The film grasps at the national socio-economic state of affairs through implications of economic inequality between Rachel and the Jordaans. The radio playing in the background of many scenes tells us about the wave of xenophobic attacks in South Africa and Rachel tells her friends about Maia's naïve grasp on her tenuous position in a white private school (paid for by the benevolent Jordaans).[3] Yet, upon the slightest prod of the underlying inequality implied, one encounters a defensive response, whether it be in the aesthetic motions performed by the film or in explicit statements by the filmmakers. When Innes was asked about the film's engagement with white privilege, he responded that

> Rachel's employers could have very easily been Zulu or Xhosa. The maid–madam dynamic is as present in contemporary black culture as it is with Afrikaans or English South Africans, but I chose to make the Jordaans white as it provided me with a familiar framework from which to create. (Innes and Meyer n.d.)

3 Foreign nationals, almost exclusively those from other African countries, are frequently the target of violence in South Africa. These attacks happen periodically, occasionally coalescing into more sustained periods of violence which receive media attention, such as the xenophobic attacks of 2008 and 2015.

Innes is stating that the racial structure of the narrative is a result of wanting to construct authentic representations (that is, he does not want to draw from a framework that is unfamiliar to him). This also means, however, that the filmmaker is manifestly denying participation in a dialogue around white privilege since, according to this statement, the racial structure of the narrative is politically inconsequential and the maid–madam dynamic has no racial dimension. Thus, Innes is interested in joining the national conversation, but perhaps does not agree that it involves race. Given these articulations, it comes as no surprise that the film appears to vacillate between a simulated engagement and an active silencing.

Afrikaans film critic Leon van Nierop (2016) proffers similar inconsistencies in his reading of the film. He lauds the text for its 'fearless and honest portrayal' (Van Nierop 2016, 387) of South Africa's current socio-political condition, but when referring to Rachel he tells us that 'Sophie is clearly well-educated' (Van Nierop 2016, 386) and then goes on to conduct a full character analysis of Chris. Throughout, *Sink* does nothing to challenge Rachel's position of servitude or the Jordaan's position of supremacy. This arrangement is in fact ratified through the film's narrative in which the disruption of Maia's death is eventually overcome so that the status quo can be re-established. In Rancierean terms, then, the film enacts 'a mode of the distribution of the sensible that recognises neither lack nor supplement' (Rancière 2017, 95), but insists on a harmonious state of affairs in which 'society is a totality comprised of groups performing specific functions and occupying determined spaces' (Rancière 2017, 95).

Innes proclaimed on SABC Digital News in 2016 that *Sink* is 'as much … a South African story [as] it is a universal tale'. I contend, however, that the film fails to authentically consider the South African present. It instead reaches for a vague universal through its emulation of European arthouse. This emulation means that *Sink* is neither a South African story nor a universal tale. As per John Dewey's formulation, quoted by William Carlos Williams (1967, 391) – 'the local is the universal, upon that all art builds' – *Sink* performs a reach for universality that inevitably crumbles because of a disregard for locality. As indicated, the cinema here emulated is perhaps the slow and steady takes of the austere world realisms, or the cool precision of an arthouse giant like Michael Haneke, cinemas that work to proclaim or disrupt through unflinching and singular intimacies. Yet, ironically, *Sink* imitates intimacy, failing to work from within any real locality. In this way, *Sink* could not be further removed from a true political cinema. Stylistically and narratively, *Sink* shows an outline of what might be a set of symptoms of intimate complexities of the South African landscape. Upon closer inspection, however, the centre – the genome of the film, that which should be the singular experience of a devastating loss – is missing. Instead, we find a cycle of displacements of experience, a neither-here-nor-there narrative that denies the very subject at which it is grasping.

Krotoa: Expedient representation?

Two years after the release of *Sink*, Roberta Durrant's *Krotoa* (2017) was released to mixed responses. Online reviews and blog posts reveal a general dissatisfaction with *Krotoa*'s representation and conception of South African history (see Mellet 2017; October 2017; Smith 2017; Van Niekerk 2019), yet the film also garnered a multitude of awards.[4] Critically, it was well received in Afrikaner media, with Leon van Nierop proclaiming it to be 'one of the best local films ever made' and praising it for its 'sober' and 'unbiased' depiction of South African history (Van Nierop 2018, author's translation). This is a rather surprising evaluation, given that the history in question is one of considerable contention.

Krotoa was a Khoi woman living in the 1650s. As a child, she was taken into the home of the Dutch settler and Commander of the Cape, Jan van Riebeeck (Conradie 1997). She grew up to become a translator for the Dutch, and mediator between the Khoi and the Dutch (Scully 2005). She later married a Danish man, with theirs becoming the first documented interracial marriage in South Africa. Her story occupies a complex position in the imaginary of a country that, after a brutal colonial period, came to epitomise state racism with the apartheid regime.

Through a certain ordering of the narrative of her life, Krotoa can be invoked as proof of the altruistic disposition of Van Riebeeck, the so-called founding father of the ruling white minority. Paint the same scenario in a slightly different hue, and she becomes blatant evidence of the ruthlessness and greed of Van Riebeeck (and, by implication, the class of people whom he came to represent – the Afrikaners). She can be invoked as an indication of the arbitrariness of racial ordering and thus the fallacy of a system such as apartheid (as, apparently, she is an ancestor of many South Africans of various races), or as proof of the potential for reconciliation. *Krotoa* is thus intended as a biopic of this figure, someone who occupies a precarious but potent ideological position, a complex position not adequately engaged with by the filmmakers (I believe).

By virtue of its subject matter alone, the film engages with a world teeming with political complexities. Despite this inexorable implication, however, the film's politics are largely ineffectual. I maintain that this is the case because, despite multiple attempts at disruption (which I will detail below), the film subscribes to, and perpetuates, a signifying economy that simply does not allow for rupture. In other words, the filmic language of *Krotoa* does not comprise a lexicon that includes the terms and concepts necessary for a counter-hegemonic expression.

Krotoa is set in the 1650s and 1660s. At the time in question, the Afrikaans language had not yet come into existence. What are we to make of the

4 See IMDb, https://www.imdb.com/title/tt3607252/awards/

fact then that the film's Dutch characters all speak Afrikaans while the Khoi characters speak Khoekhoe? The Afrikaans language bears enormous weight and symbolic import in South Africa. The language is a creolisation of Dutch, infused with other European and Asian languages spoken by peoples enslaved by the Dutch. It also contains significant remnants of Khoekhoe (Roberge 2002, 79). Despite its manifestly hybrid origins, Afrikaans was fiercely annexed by white nationalist movements, and asserted as a white language throughout the 1900s (Giliomee 2003, 217). Through the efforts of the nationalist apartheid government, Afrikaans became a crucial symbol of Afrikaner identity (Giliomee 2003, 365), and in contemporary South Africa, white Afrikaans speakers still attach emotional and spiritual import to the Afrikaans language, regarding it as 'an integral part of their being and selfhood' (Steyn 2016, 484).

Krotoa, through its no doubt expedient, diegetic conflation of seventeenth-century Dutch and contemporary Afrikaans, effectively posits Krotoa and her people as having learned Afrikaans from the white settlers and not as having co-authored it. The film thus re-enacts the motion of nationalist annexation. It seizes Afrikaans as the domain of white Afrikaners. In fact, through its appeal to a history, the film does more than just that: *Krotoa* provides an implicit justification for the nationalist appropriation of Afrikaans. The decision to have the Dutch speak Afrikaans also realigns the figure of Jan van Riebeeck with Afrikanerdom, restating the symbol of the *volksplanter* (planter of the people/nation). *Volksplanter* is a designation historically assigned to Van Riebeeck, whose figure has come to symbolise the origins of Afrikanerdom.

Historian Leslie Witz (1997: 60) explains that a rendition of the past in which Van Riebeeck was 'the founder figure of a racially exclusive settler nation in South Africa' was promoted and fortified by Afrikaner cultural bodies such as the FAK (Federation of Afrikaans Cultural Organisations) and the ATKV (Afrikaans Language and Culture Organisation) throughout the 1900s (Witz 2003). Witz maintains that there is no actual teleological trajectory in which Van Riebeeck's landing signalled the origin of white rule in South Africa (Witz 1997, 7). Through the careful curation of select histories, however, the figure of Van Riebeeck has become emblematic of white rule in South Africa and Afrikaner history.

However, unlike the way in which the apartheid state might have conceived of Van Riebeeck's governance, *Krotoa* presents it as devoid of any strict racial hierarchy. This revisionist approach corresponds with that of Afrikaans cultural bodies after 1994. The same body so heavily involved in the nationalist propagation of the symbolic Van Riebeeck, the ATKV, has been campaigning to include black Afrikaans-speakers – about 60 per cent of Afrikaans speakers (Steyn 2016, 34) – in their organisation. In conducting a study of such campaigns, Theo Sonnekus argues that the post-apartheid liberal paradigm 'places increasing pressure on Afrikaner culture to define itself in ways that allow for the inclusion of Otherness' (Sonnekus 2016, 86). However, according

to Sonnekus, these attempts at inclusivity 'operate in the service of a hegemonic Afrikanerness' (Sonnekus 2016, 89), indicating an 'attempt to salvage (at least some of) the power and ethnic stability compromised by South Africa's democratisation' (Sonnekus 2016, 89).

In *Krotoa*, Van Riebeeck is shown to be the paternal guardian and safekeeper of Krotoa's happiness and racial harmony, a figure aligned with the enlightened post-apartheid Afrikaner. When Van Riebeeck has to leave the Cape to pursue a different post, Krotoa's life collapses upon his departure because the next administration does not show the same racial progressiveness that Van Riebeeck did. Ergo, consonant with the ATKV's assertions that it is an inclusive body, *Krotoa* posits the mythical cradle of Afrikanerdom as an inclusive world of paternal congeniality, the same paternal congeniality seen in *Sink*.

The story of Jan van Riebeeck as an intrepid and kind-hearted adventurer is a story constructed to bolster and match the ideals of white Afrikaner nationalism (Witz 1997, 36). Despite revisionism that works as an attempt at restoration of an icon to suit contemporary ideals, the film does not effectively veer from this myth, which thoroughly sponsors the iconography, aesthetic and narrative of *Krotoa*. Here, an Afrikaans-speaking Van Riebeeck reinscribes the racial and linguistic delineation asserted in dominant Afrikaner mythology. It is in this construction of the figure of Van Riebeeck, and the position of the Afrikaans language, that *Krotoa* composes a signifying economy that precludes the expression of certain ideals and experiences. The film thus performs in aid of the paternal law, which, Judith Butler (1999, 38) writes 'ought to be understood not as a deterministic divine will, but as a perpetual bumbler, preparing the ground for the insurrections against him'. Akin to the bumbling motions described by Butler, the film reflects an aesthetic and iconographic vacillation between denial and affirmation.

A crucial scene, which is illustrative of this, takes place when Krotoa negotiates a difficult and tense agreement between the Guranghaicona and the Dutch. This is a few months after she had been raped by Van Riebeeck, become pregnant, and suffered a miscarriage. When it is discovered that Krotoa is pregnant, she is disgraced. Van Riebeeck certainly does not want to be known as the father and, having witnessed the ill intentions of a visiting Monsieur Bassette towards Krotoa, pins the rape on the visitor. It would seem that Krotoa does not share the true events with anyone, and the secret remains between herself and Van Riebeeck. Krotoa is sent to go and live with her sister, but she suffers a miscarriage en route. She thus returns to Van Riebeeck's outpost only to find him on the verge of launching an attack on the Guranghaicona, but convinces him to negotiate with them first. She then accompanies the Dutch to the Guranghaicona village to aid the negotiations.

In the mise-en-scene of the negotiation scene, Krotoa is situated between the Dutch and the Guranghaicona, but she is in European dress, and her figure visually extends the line of European men, not at all fitting into the curved line

formed by the Khoekhoe men. In this scene, she is acting in the service of the VOC (Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie – Dutch East India Company), meaning that, visually and narratively, Krotoa aids the purposes of the Dutch/Afrikaners and not those of the Khoekhoe. The sequence is chiefly composed of a wide shot, and medium close-ups of Van Riebeeck, Krotoa and Autshumato (Krotoa's uncle, who was a well-known Guranghaicona leader). In two instances, Krotoa and Van Riebeeck exchange meaningful glances: the first time when Krotoa's violation is mentioned by Autshumato, and the second time when it is clear that negotiations have been successful and Van Riebeeck is pleased. As significant affective encounters, I want to take a moment to consider these two glances.

The first glance happens as Autshumato angrily tells Van Riebeeck that Krotoa was assaulted while under his care, stating that in the Khoekhoe community women are protected (as opposed to in the Dutch community). In this accusation, and in the brief skirmish that erupts, lies a contest between two fathers and the question: who is the good father, and who is the bad father? Autshumato is accusing Van Riebeeck of being a bad father. Dramatically ironic, Autshumato does not know just how correct this accusation is. While these accusations are being lodged, Van Riebeeck's eyes dart toward Krotoa in a medium close-up, and she returns the glance in a close-up.

According to the cinematic taxonomy constructed by French philosopher Gilles Deleuze, shots focused on faces constitute affection images, in that their purpose is the reflection of affective data (Deleuze 2001, 87–97), information about feeling and experience within a scene. Writing about Deleuze's affection image, Ronald Bogue explains that 'the face converts external movements in space into movements of expression' (Bogue 2003, 76). What we see in this moment, then, is the visible absorption of all the implications of Autshumato's words, their affective presence in the subjectivities of Krotoa and Van Riebeeck. The exchange is a moment of exposure where Van Riebeeck's secret is prodded at and made aesthetically present. Krotoa and Van Riebeeck both know that he is the rapist and they both consider it prudent to keep quiet about this fact. At this point in the scene, however, the affective trajectory is still uncertain. Negotiations might not be successful, Van Riebeeck might not triumph as the good father.

The second exchange of glances, however, is what clinches the matter. As Autshumato reluctantly accedes to Krotoa's suggestions, she looks to Van Riebeeck expectantly and he, in a close-up, allows a smile to flicker across his face. The moment is one of consummate consensus: Van Riebeeck is the proud father and the fact that Krotoa exchanges no such glances with her uncle, suggests that her allegiance does not lie with him. The scene is intended as a triumph for Krotoa, who is at her most powerful in the VOC and about to find love with Pieter van Meerhof. Her power is regulated by a signifying economy in which Van Riebeeck is a kindly father figure, and within this economy Krotoa is virtuous, not as an autonomous agent, but when she pleases this father.

Just like Chris in *Sink*, Van Riebeeck occupies the position of the paternal ruler. And just like Rachel in *Sink*, Krotoa's purpose in the narrative is not that of a protagonist, but a device to signify consent to the role and position of Afrikaners. Despite the filmmakers' hope expressed in an interview with Menán van Heerden and Kaye Ann Williams on LitNet that they were able to prompt the interrogation of prevailing myths, the film foregrounds Jan van Riebeeck and the Afrikaans language – two figures that have been propagated as ontological features of Afrikanerdom – and clasps them together. Through this binding of affects, language and myth, the film affirms the roles and meanings of these figures in the local imaginary, calcifying dominant associations as opposed to offering any productive disruption.

Since *Sink* and *Krotoa* lack the momentum provided by authentic, singular moments, the Afrikaner dramas end up being shaped by dominant, consensual aesthetics instead of creating their own. Experiences that are intended to be central elements of the texts are channelled through the expressive modes of the oppressively visible and are thus delimited. These experiences are simultaneously shaped by the pressures of the dominant meaning-making frameworks of the sensible order. In deferring to such frameworks instead of drawing from authentic moments of intimacy, any attempt at politics is rendered ineffectual.

In both *Krotoa* and *Sink*, then, there appears to be a deep-seated bewilderment in terms of tackling the contemporary moment, as irreconcilable contradictions permeate their claims to the political. It comes as no surprise that a context and a history as convoluted and singular as South Africa's give rise to the expressive dilemma evident here. This does not mean, as has been proven, that an authentic expressive language is unattainable in the South African context.

Love the One You Love

As an example of current political South African cinema, one might contrast the Afrikaner drama approach to *Love the One You Love* (Bass 2015), the work of South African filmmaker Jenna Bass. Bass's films display an aesthetic reflective of the South African condition; reflective in that the stylistic systems of Bass's films take their cues from a unique and peculiar world, not a liminal framework determined by foreign imaginaries. Instead of grappling with the exposition of South African circumstances, Bass observes their fractal presence in the moments that make up everyday life. In other words, socio-political complexities are shown in their smallest iterations, that of human subjectivity and intimacy, and these smaller parts prove to have the same structural make-up as their larger societal wholes. Bass's cinema ranges from the politically oblique (*Love the One You Love*), to explicit observations of meeting points between different sectors of society (*High Fantasy, Flatland*) (Bass 2017; 2018).

Her first feature, *Love the One You Love*, reassesses the notion of love. The film tells of a couple, Sandile and Terri, who start suspecting their love for one another to be a cosmic conspiracy. The narrative plays out in Cape Town, but this milieu is not foregrounded. The film focuses instead on the intimate affects produced by a specific socio-political context, mapping themes of political unrest onto the uneasiness of a romantic relationship. A leitmotif that illustrates this is the image of Nelson Mandela. In *Love the One You Love*, as in post-apartheid populist iconography, Mandela's face is ubiquitous. In the film it can be seen in advertisements on trucks driving by; on cards in gift shops; and, importantly, in the form of masks worn by mysterious figures lurking outside of Terri's apartment one night.

The promises of reconciliation and reform so ardently felt during the 1990s transition to democracy are epitomised by the figure of Mandela, South African 'reconciliation's chief political architect' (Du Toit 2017, 170). Consequently, Mandela has become a highly charged symbol in the South African imaginary. Over the past two decades, this symbol has accrued a saccharine disingenuousness, because the rainbow nation promised by the end of apartheid did not come into being in the way many had hoped (Du Toit 2017, 169). This sentimental promise is eerily mirrored in the relationship of Terri and Sandile, for just as their love might be a conspiracy that keeps them from authentic experiences, so the symbol of the rainbow nation can operate as a governing ideal that precludes the expression of dissent. Bass aesthetically communicates the sinister sweetness of this contradiction. One night when the couple is spending time together in Terri's apartment, Terri notices a car from which two figures appear to be surveying the apartment, and which speeds off upon being spotted. Both figures are wearing paper masks of Mandela's face. The eyes of this static face are cut from the masks, and behind them we see moving eyes of figures from a different time and space. The uncanny effect produced by the discrepant features of the masks and the faces they conceal clashes resoundingly with the mythological position of Nelson Mandela and so the film disrupts one of post-democratic South Africa's most salient ideological images. Such a disjuncture disturbs the hegemonically sanctioned positions of a sign and its image, fulfilling the task of effective fiction according to Rancière, which 'undoes, and then re-articulates, connections between signs and images, images and times, and signs and spaces' (Rancière 2010, 149).

Terri and Sandile's world seems to be haunted by spectres of reconciliation, spectres that are terrifying in their mawkish insistence and disconnection from the actual moment. Their own love, which is deemed perfect by their friends and family, feels like yet another ominous remove from an uncomfortable reality of very little actual connection. This undercurrent of disconnection is aesthetically communicated through what American philosopher Steven Shaviro might describe as 'post-cinematic' modes (Shaviro 2010). Shaviro states that 'digital

technologies, together with neo-liberal economic relations, have given birth to radically new ways of manufacturing and articulating lived experience' (Shaviro 2010, 2). Such post-cinematic expressions 'are best regarded as affective maps, which do not just passively trace or represent, but actively construct and perform, the social relations, flows and feelings that they are ostensibly 'about' (Shaviro 2010, 7). Similarly, Bass cuts between different aspect ratios, applies inconsistent hues, and makes use of disorientating devices such as, in one scene, colourful flashing fairy lights. In this way the mode of the film, which is made possible by the digital age of video and editing software, also performs the emotional narrative that it conveys.

This subtle and synaesthetic approach is in stark contrast to a film like *Krotoa,* which also deals with the role of a historical figure. *Krotoa* engages with the figure of Van Riebeeck in a manner that reinforces its symbolic significance. *Love the One You Love*, on the other hand, looks at the uncanny presence of a symbol that has lost its potency and drastically reframes it. *Love the One You Love* disrupts the sensible order in a very direct, affective manner, as opposed to the faux engagement of the Afrikaner dramas discussed earlier in this paper. Since *Sink* and *Krotoa* lack the momentum provided by authentic, singular moments, the Afrikaner dramas end up being shaped by dominant consensual aesthetics instead of creating their own. These Afrikaner dramas indicate a lack of attention paid to the present moment or the subject in question. Experiences that are intended to be central elements of the texts are channelled through the expressive modes of the oppressively visible and are thus delimited. These experiences are simultaneously shaped by the pressures of the dominant meaning-making frameworks of the sensible order. Any attempt at politics is depoliticised through this motion.

Within a Rancierean framework, I want to propose that intimacy itself has the potential for politics because it is singular and because it is resistant to being made visible. Intimacy then will always involve introducing a novel moment, a new piece of sense data into the sensible order. Thus, intimacy is mobile, and disruptive in its mobility. For the predicament of cinematic expression in South Africa, as exemplified by a problematic white Afrikaner cinema, we might therefore find a potential solution in the immediate approach demonstrated by a cinema of intimacy, which shows a capacity to cinematically and critically figure South Africa in a useful and sensitive way.

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10

African Cinemas across African Borders: Bridging the Gap between North Africa and Africa South of the Sahara

A conversation between Jihan El-Tahri and Pervaiz Khan

The following conversation between Pervaiz Khan and Jihan El-Tahri was conducted in two parts – the first in 2018 and the second in 2019. Jihan El-Tahri is an internationally renowned documentary filmmaker, journalist on Middle Eastern geo-politics and a vociferous advocate for African and Arab cinema. She has spent over 30 years of her life fostering dialogue and institutional relationships between North African filmmakers and filmmakers south of the Sahara. El-Tahri's directorial credits include *Nasser*, *Behind the Rainbow*, *Cuba, An African Odyssey* and *The House of Saud*. El-Tahri is the current director of DOX BOX, a Berlin-based organisation devoted to the development of documentary cinema in Africa and across the Arab world. In her capacity as the organisation's new director, El-Tahri is working towards strengthening the historical ties of these two African regions and doing the work of building bridges in a mutually inclusive way.

Part 1

Pervaiz Khan (PK): Could you speak about the role that cinema has had in struggles against colonialism in Africa, especially the role played by Egypt?

Jihan El-Tahri (JE-T): I think there were two kinds of cinema, the underground cinema and the propaganda cinema. And a lot of the underground cinema we

don't even have archives of the films, we don't even see those films, which is one of the reasons why we really need to recuperate our image, recuperate this history that is being lost. For example, you have someone like Hani Jawherieh, an early Palestinian filmmaker who did really interesting documentaries with footage that you would never be able to find or see today because it was in the early days; recently a single reel of one of his documentaries was found in Tokyo!

PK: What period are we talking about?

JE-T: The sixties and seventies. The propaganda, or let's call it official cinema, is the one I think I should concentrate on. With Egyptian cinema, you have the pre-revolution cinema. The start of the cinema machine in Egypt was early, in a similar way to South Africa. On 5 November 1896 the first Lumière screening took place in Alexandria in one of the halls of the Toussoun Bourse (Café Zawani). The power of the image was immediately recognised. You had a whole host of Egyptian directors who were from different communities in the early stage. Egyptian, but of different origins, like Togo Mizrahi, one of the really important early filmmakers. He was an Egyptian Jew, from a family of Italian origin. They were Egyptians like everybody else. The Palestinian struggle and the wars changed the nature of who we call Egyptian filmmakers and who we don't. If you talk to people today, most people don't know who Togo Mizrahi was. Yet, his films were amongst the most important in terms of transmission of a way of life, a political context of the pre-revolution. Then comes Gamal Abdul Nasser, who was Egypt's president from 1956 to 1970. Nasser from very early on was very aware that the image is one of the main ways of consolidating power, most of all consolidating the mythology of the revolution. The mythology of who the new Egyptian man should appear to be. The whole image of the peasantry in Egypt was created in films. It wasn't necessarily what the peasants looked like, but that was the image of the post-revolution Egyptian. Even films by Youssef Chahine, who is one of the least propaganda filmmakers but was officially financed by the state production machine, films like *Bab al-Hadid* (Cairo Station, 1958). These films of fifties presented the new Egypt and tried to negate what the old Egypt really looked like. So, you have other films like *Fi Baitina Rajul* (There is a Man in Our House, 1961), one of the early films that Omar Sharif starred in. It was about the struggle between the feudal society and how a brilliant young Egyptian could not access any form of social mobility unless he had some connection with the monarchy and the film aims to show how this hierarchical system was destroyed. Then you get to the point which I think is a really important marker, which was the adaptation of trilogy novels by Naguib Mahfouz to the cinema screen. The filming of the *Cairo Trilogy* (1964/66/72) is one of the fundamental moments. It is where what you think old Egypt looks like, what the social relationships are like, what the family relationships are, the

position of the father and the children breaking away and rebelling. All these issues were contained in a three-part series that begins just before the 1919 revolution and ends with the 1952 revolution. So, it was a means of recreating the imagery of Egypt from the perspective of the new people in power. This film was crucial because its narrative was about a middle-class family not about the aristocracy – I don't know if I'm answering your question?

PK: You are giving a sense of the importance of cinema in creating a particular national identity. A national identity, which was trying to tear itself away from the colonial sense that it had been.

JE-T: Absolutely. For example, the monarchy in Egypt, they were obviously Egyptian, but were of Albanian descent. King Farouk, the last king, was the first regent to give speeches in Arabic. Before then French was the language. The monarchy and the elite were not aware that they were seen as colonial representatives more than anything. One of the interesting things about the revolution coming in 1952, and being the earliest one, was the creating of a cinema department as part of the economy. What it meant was Egyptian film became one of the main exports of the new state, especially to the rest of the African continent. Most of the films were about rising up against colonialism; the young Egyptian who could no longer stand the shackles of colonialism. With the export of these films the whole idea of rising up against colonialism was embedded even within the love stories. For example, from the fifties until the mid-seventies Senegal used to show an Egyptian film every Thursday.

PK: Was there any reciprocal showing of Senegalese films in Egypt, such as Ousmane Sembène's work?

JE-T: *La noire de … (Black Girl)* by Sembène was made in 1966; it and the rest of the films would not have come to Egypt because they were in French and up until today Egyptian cinema is a one-way street that goes out; that started changing with Sadat in the late seventies. Right now, it is very contained. You have to remember Egypt has more than 100 million people, so they do not actually need an external audience and so you find very little. In 1951 *Ibn El-Nil* (Son of the Nile) by Youssef Chahine was the first Egyptian film that went to Cannes. There was not another Egyptian film in Cannes until the late 1990s. The ministry that had cinema under its auspices was called the Ministry of National Guidance. The name in and of itself was very telling. It was part of the process of formulating the new postcolonial vision; in order to do that you needed to debunk some of the realities of the past.

PK: There is a short archive film of Nasser talking about women and how the

Muslim Brotherhood wanted women to cover up. I am wondering where this fitted into this vision of the new Egypt.

JE-T: Some background information to contextualise what was taking place. Nasser's manifesto was a six-point manifesto; the most important point was the one about land redistribution, which was the most crucial for change. Pre-revolution when you bought land, you bought the land with the people who worked on it – they were serfs. The transformation from serfs to a proper peasantry was a key point. The image of the *fellah* – a very specific Egyptian word for peasant – was very important. Egypt was then the granary of the Middle East, so those who were part of the rural sector were the ones who were feeding everyone. The second point of Nasser's manifesto was development and modernity, and this was connected to the cities. It was not necessarily equality, but women being part of the workforce was essential. When you look at some of the archive footage you notice that most of the factory workers were women. Now it's very important to remember that in the early fifties, as early as 1951, there was a women's union – Egypt boasts one of the very first feminist movements - which was calling for women's universal suffrage. In 1951 the women's union stormed parliament demanding women's rights. This was before the 1952 revolution. So, the revolution happens and Nasser comes into power with the women demanding rights and having been part of the revolution in general. When I was telling you about Naguib Mahfouz's trilogy of novels, one of the really important sections of the trilogy is the 1919 revolution. It is the women veiled and carrying flags who play an active part in starting the 1919 revolution. The role of women in the uprising against colonialism, storming the parliament, was extremely present. When Nasser comes into power, the role of women is something that he clearly builds upon. Now let me think of a film; even in Youssef Chahine's *Cairo Station*, the main character is the woman newspaper seller.

PK: There are archival photographs of Egyptians during the 1940s, from which it is clear that the interplay between women and modernity is not something Nasser created, or the filmmakers invented.

JE-T: Absolutely not, but he built on it. Universal suffrage came about 1956. For example, you have women like Cesa Nabarawi who returned from studying in Paris in the early thirties and became the leading journalist for the French language magazine *L'Egyptienne*, which is actually the first feminist periodical started by Huda Shaarawi in 1925. Doria Shafik, who was also part of the women's organisation called *Bint el Nil* (Daughter of the Nile), campaigning for their rights later in 1948 started an Arabic language journal by the same name. It had very political editorials but it was also a fashion magazine, it was extremely modern. If you go online and look at some of the covers, you will see these fancy-looking, very

defiant women. I don't think including or excluding women was an issue. I know the archive film clip you are referring to. In it Nasser is laughing his head off and saying to the supreme guide of the Muslim Brotherhood, 'You want me to put a veil on ten million women when you yourself can't even get your daughters veiled.' I think that's very telling, which means that the Muslim Brotherhood's women were not veiled. I don't think it was an issue. Women veiling becomes an issue in the 1970s; that is Anwar Sadat's doing.

PK: Nasser comes to power with a groundswell of support in 1952. In Ghana you have Kwame Nkrumah coming to power in 1956. Soon after, at the start of the sixties, there is independence in other African countries. Could you speak about the links you referred to which started to develop the cause of Pan-Africanism?

JE-T: I think there's one thing we need to clarify. The newsreels were like mini-films. There's a newsreel that I have of Ghanaian leader Kwame Nkrumah's visit to Egypt. He marries an Egyptian and also buys tanks! The formulation of the newsreel becomes part of the discourse itself.

PK: We're talking of an era where television doesn't exist.

JE-T: Television comes later. Newsreels were screened before every film. You go to the cinema; you have the first half hour of imagery that is of a different format. It's not just the news, it's like little stories.

PK: They are produced by the same ministry you mentioned earlier?

JE-T: Yes, the Ministry of National Guidance.

PK: So, this is a creation of a vision of Pan-Africanism?

JE-T: Completely. Another example is one of the newsreels I have of Haile Selassie's visit to Egypt. You know the Pope of the Orthodox Church was in Egypt until 1963. Haile Selassie was Orthodox; not for his actual coronation but for his coming into power he needed the benediction of the Pope. He comes to Egypt and there is the whole ceremony with the Pope. It's a beautiful ten-minute ceremony. Nasser is present in all of this. It's really important on two fronts: on the front of Pan-Africanism and also Nasser being father of the nation.

PK: Nasser didn't do away with religion, but built a sense of national identity out of the multiplicities of what was in Egypt.

JE-T: Nasser clearly wanted a secular Egypt. He rose above religion but was present in all their different manifestations.

PK: Cinema plays a role in creating a sense of that.

JE-T: Completely. Then I think the process of cinema is really interesting. In the case of the censorship board, what censorship was about was not about who was kissing and who was not. If you look at some of the films until the seventies, there's open kissing, they're mainly love stories. Even into the seventies there's nudity. The censorship board wasn't focused on morality in any way, it was focusing on a general ethics. Not on a sexual morality. That comes in later. All that happens in the seventies.

PK: This a period of 15 to 20 years of creating a national identity at a political and a cultural level, and cinema is woven into that.

JE-T: There were specific actors like Faten Hamama, who from the age of 18**,** played a very important role in that. In all the earlier films she played characters such as the daughter of the landowner who was a naïve, beautiful and gentle woman. She was not necessarily happy with the way her father treated the peasants. And then she would fall in love with one of the kids of the peasants, and it would be an impossible story. Then later on further into the sixties if you look at all the different roles she played you can take it almost as a thread of what the vision of women's role in Egypt could be. In one of her later roles, in the seventies, she is the working mother of ten kids. One adolescent was smoking weed, the other one was falling in love and she holds it all together while working. If you go through Faten Hamama's films there's a very interesting evolution in what the Egyptian women represents or at least what the state wants Egyptian women to see as the role of women.

PK: A constructed vision through which the Egyptian state filters the changes taking place and returns them to the people through popular culture.

JE-T: Voila! Faten Hamama did not play a single role ever with a veil on.

PK: Which is what a whole generation of Egyptians would have been used to seeing in the fifties and sixties.

JE-T: No, there is this very important moment in the twenties. Huda Shaarawi sheds the veil. There were two women who were the backbone of women's liberation in Egypt. There was Huda Shaarawi and Safiya Zaghloul; both of them shed the veil publicly. In Egypt in the twenties, thirties and forties there was no veil. If you came from the rural area you wore the traditional dress where you covered your head but it was not a veil. In Spain women were veiling themselves till the seventies. The key point is religion did not come into political discourse, for or against, until the seventiess. The stories contained in most Egyptian films

up till 1972/73 were about the battle against oppression. What happened in the mid-seventies is that Anwar Sadat [Egyptian president from 1970 to 1981] takes the theme of oppression and shifts it. Films start coming out about the dictatorship of the previous rule. You have films like *Al Karnak (1975)* which is an extremely important film which unveils the dictatorship and oppression of postcolonial rule under Nasser. So, with Sadat there is a second wave of reconstruction of identity.

PK: From this period onward, a new vision gets created, reformulated. French Marxist Maxime Robinson in his writing said that religion did not play any part in decolonisation across the Middle East.

JE-T: None at all. I'll tell you when it starts to play a part is after the 1967 Arab–Israeli war. It didn't play an immediate part in the image production at the time, that happened later. The Arab defeat in 1967 gave a huge push to the Islamic movement. Why? Because they were saying, 'How could this little country with barely two million people defeat a nation of 50 million people? It's because they stuck to their religion and God was on their side.'

PK: Maxime Robinson also makes the point that what was called democracy in decolonised countries could not fully function because in essence the colonial powers were still there. When supposed democracy did not work the political religious forces turned to a mythologised past, the pre-democracy and pre-decolonisation past, and political Islam got a foothold across the Muslim world. When I was growing up in 1960s Britain my maternal uncle was a trade union organiser. Nasser was a key figure for him. There was a large framed photograph of Nasser in his front room. The defeat of 1967 had a huge impact on my uncle.

JE-T: I'll give you a very simple example. I was editing my installation with a Senegalese guy in Dakar we were editing some footage of Nasser and he starts crying. I ask what happened. He says, 'My father watched his speeches day and night.' His father was dead and he said that image reminded him of his father. Nasser's vision for postcolonial Egypt was based on three concentric circles to work together on the future. There's the Pan-Arab, Pan-African and the Pan-Islamic. They're concentric, we have a centre that belongs to us all. And that centre is what he was working on.

PK: In terms of Pan-African and Pan-North African, Egypt must have had an effect on other North African countries?

JE-T: When you say North Africa, I would limit it mainly to Algeria. Because Morocco, although Mohamed the Fifth was close to Nasser and he was even

there for the start of the Aswan Dam, Morocco remained a monarchy and was not part of Nasser's vision because it was a monarchy. Algeria was really important; Ahmed Ben Bella [first president of Algeria 1963–65] and Nasser were extremely close. Later Nasser was also close to Houari Boumédiène [second president of Algeria 1965–78] because they were part of this idea of forging the new man, be it Arab or continental. To go back to cinema. *Battle for Algiers* (1966), which was proudly Algeria's first independent production, I know that Egypt did contribute funds. Also, the very first gesture that Nasser makes towards Algeria when it gets its independence in 1963 is to send Arabic teachers for every school. Because at that stage education in Algeria was 100 per cent French.

PK: Egypt plays the role of being a catalyst in parts of Africa, but also within the broader third world, the decolonising world.

JE-T: I'll take this further. Mohammed Faiq, who was the Minister of National Guidance, was also Nasser's envoy to African revolutions. What Egypt did was to set up an import–export company that had its headquarters at one stage in Abidjan in Ivory Coast. Under the cover of this import–export company, all the gunrunning to the rest of the continent took place. The arms sent to Lumumba's faction in the Congo went through Abidjan from Egypt. The same import–export company also dealt with distributing film.

PK: Exporting culture, cinema, arms and developing Pan-Africanism.

JE-T: Yes, every liberation movement including the ANC, the PAC, the Angolans, the MPLA, the FNLA and UNITA had an office in Cairo. For example, the PANAF (Pan-African Cultural Festival) was hosted in Algeria in 1969 but was supported logistically by the Egyptians because Algeria had only been independent for barely six years. So, when you see some of the organisational credits you go, 'Oh! He's Egyptian, he's Egyptian.' It was an era of collaborations.

PK: Cultural festivals became a meeting point and an opportunity for critical exchange.

JE-T: They are really interesting. I think they are an outcome, or an offshoot, of what the Pan-African conferences had tried to do. Between the 1945 5th Pan African conference in Manchester in which W.E.B. Du Bois, George Padmore, Mary Ashworth Garvey and Kwame Nkrumah participated and the 6th Pan African conference in Tanzania in 1974 there was nothing. But there were cultural festivals. I think there was at some point this realisation, when all the countries were getting their independence, of 'How do we forge the new man?'

I'm coming back to the same point. It's the exchange of culture that was the first stepping stone in creating a common denominator. Getting to know each other through culture. In 1969 you get PANAF taking place in Algeria; and earlier than that in 1966 you have FESTMAN (First World Festival of Black Arts) in Dakar. But I think the PANAF was a response to FESTMAN. Because there was a whole problematic around the FESTMAN where Senghor did not want to invite North Africa. Because West Africa and the Francophone Caribbean were developing the concept of Negritude, whereas the Anglophone side were still on the Pan-African track. When FESTMAN was being organised, they decided not to invite North Africa and interestingly it was the Nigerian delegate who kicked up a massive stink, and so finally they were invited. It was a big thing. The PANAF in 1969 comes out of this, inviting everybody, because Pan-African was the whole continent. Negritude was about blackness, and Algeria was about connecting the continental culture with its diversity. One of the ironies is that the only cinematic heritage we have left of Algeria in 1969 is thr film Festival *Pan-African d' Alger* by William Klein, a Paris-based photographer/filmmaker from the USA. There would have been the official camera people, the official this and that. The filmmakers were looking more at story and not capturing culture as something to be documented.

PK: Tunisia through individuals, starts to play a role.

JE-T: Taher Chriaa, as a Tunisian filmmaker, is crucial in the Pan-Africanist vision for cinema. He and Ousmane Sembène start the idea of a Pan-African Federation of Filmmakers (FEPACI) out of which later emerges the oldest and most important African film festival, FESPACO (Pan-African Film and Television Festival of Ouagadougou), which just celebrated its 50th anniversary! This all starts when a core group of people studying in Paris meet and decide to act together. African cinema comes out of the diaspora. I think the interesting thing about Senegalese cinema, is that's the only one that starts outside but comes inside very quickly.

PK: You mean with Ousmane Sembène's work, outside and then in.

JE-T: Sembène outside and then in, actually even when he was outside he was only working about the inside – which is still the recurring model. Sembène starts as a writer, his first book is written in France, *Le Docker Noir* (The Black Docker, 1956). Then he goes back home to do *La noire de…* (Black Girl, 1966), which goes to Cannes; he continues to be part of the French circuit. But then the following generation of Djibril Diop Mambéty and others, start internally, even if they were abroad, but it becomes very internal. You have pre-Sembène filmmakers but no one remembers or recognises them. A whole generation from the 1950s, people

like the Senegalese Paulin Soumanou Vieyra, people like the Sudanese Gadella Gubara who made *Song of Khartoum* (1955). They were making films, but they were one-offs. They were not part of a movement, so their films fell on deaf ears, so to speak. Paulin Soumanou Vieyra made *Afrique sur Seine* (Africa on the River Seine), also in the diaspora, made in 1955. Sembène is actually the second generation but because he slowly creates a whole body of work rather than just a one-off, he is recognised as the 'Father of African cinema'.

PK: A body of work that can be seen as an intervention.

JE-T: Creating a discourse, having something to say. Why is Youssef Chahine important? It's because he has a body of work that not only says something, but also is a witness to an evolution of a culture.

PK: It's not just about making a film, it says something about the time that it is made in.

JE-T: Yes, it inserts itself into how the outside sees the inside, and what the inside wants to transmit to the outside.

PK: It plays a role in creating the narrative, as opposed to just being on the edges of it.

JE-T: Yes, creating a dominant narrative is what all this is about in a way. What I was saying earlier about the mythology being constructed. What was *La noire de* by Sembène? Yes, she's going to be a cleaning woman; but she's elegant, she's beautiful, she knows what she wants. It's not about what she does but rather who she is. She refuses servitude even when she is enslaved. It's a whole new construct of the African woman at the time.

PK: The earlier filmmakers did not manage to create a body of work which entered into the narrative.

JE-T: They are dismissed, they are overlooked.

PK: Overlooked and forgotten, because to dismiss them you would have to know that they were there.

JE-T: Yes, let me go to a point that I think is really important. Part of the destruction of current African cinema is the concept of financing only first-time filmmakers. The result of that approach is what you have ended up with, in the last twenty years or so, is two or three people having bodies of work and everybody

else incapable of financing a second or third film, maybe a second but hardly ever a third.

PK: What happens if you've made your first film? Where are you going to go then?

JE-T: You might be lucky and get your second film based on the merits of your first. But you can't construct a body of work without three films.

PK: Similar funding models operate in Europe. They have been adopted, adapted, for Africa.

JE-T: I actually think it is the other way around, this model was constructed in Europe for Africa, and now we impose them on ourselves. That for me is part of the destruction of cinema.

PK: Jean-Luc Goddard said that taxi drivers, surgeons and butchers have the opportunity to practise their craft every day and filmmakers do not because of the challenges of fundraising. It's only by doing that you improve and your work gets seen, by making more and more.

JE-T: Yes, but I'm taking it a step further. I'm saying every filmmaker who is putting their five cents worth into the narrative of where he or she is coming from allows for the building of a coherent vision through a multiplicity of sources of a certain period of time.

PK: In literature it is understood that it takes time for a writer to find their voice. The voice can only develop through writing.

JE-T: Absolutely. So, in the fifties and the sixties you have all these people who go back to Egypt, not just Youssef Chahine but Hassan El Imam, Salah Abu Seif and others. They made tens of films so they have a language, they have a perspective. They deal with social issues that are different from the social issues that Youssef Chahine deals with. So, when you want to look 50 years down the line, when you want to look at Egypt in the sixties through film, you have a multiplicity of voices that create a narrative that is a complex weave. This is where we can start talking about cinema and funding. The success of Egyptian cinema was mainly because cinema was considered an essential part of the Egyptian economy. Production was state-financed and continues to be state-financed. *The Battle of Algiers* (1966), the first Algerian film, was made by Gillo Pontecorvo, an Italian. But the script was written by an Algerian and it was 100 per cent financed by Algeria. That means that the mythology of the Battle of Algiers was created by the state.

PK: The newly emerged nation state was able to put its resources into it without interference from the old colonial power.

JE-T: Voila! In the late sixties and seventies culture comes to be seen as an area for state involvement. You start to see the development of all these funds. That's where FESPACO is the outcome of FEPACI as I mentioned earlier. The Federation was trying to find a common voice and they managed to get a seat in the OAU [Organisation of African Unity] as observers. Which meant that they could lobby for cinema financing every African leader during every OAU summit. Sembène, Taher Chriaa, Lionel Ngakane and a few others took that on. That's where they sit together and say, 'Yes we might be able to each get money, but as long as we can only show our films in the former colonial countries we will never have a coherent vision of what we're all doing.'

PK: A major shift takes place.

JE-T: Thomas Sankara [leader of Burkina Faso] is an essential part of the Pan-African project. I'd say he's the second wind of the Pan-African vision.

PK: He tackles colonialism head on, what had happened historically to Africa and the concept of debt and whose debt are we paying. What happens with the establishment of FESPACO? You mentioned some of the key people.

JE-T: With the setting up of FESPACO, in Burkina Faso, new possibilities open up. If your film does not meet the interests and desires of your former coloniser, it doesn't matter, it can still be seen and survive in a different space, which was not the case previously. I think that is fundamental. Let me give you an example. You could not show your film at the Berlin Film Festival if it had been shown anywhere else before Berlin. Berlin and FESPACO happen practically at the same time in February. On two occasions, despite my films being selected for Berlin, I chose to go to FESPACO. It's the only space where Africans can actually exchange ideas amongst themselves. There was a long-standing tradition of the centre of FESPACO being the Hotel Independence in Ouagadougou, until it was destroyed in the riots a few years ago. Part of the tradition was that the founding fathers of FESPACO had this table and Sembène always had room number one. The founding fathers' table was known as the Baobab. You could only go to the Baobab if you were invited. You would have young filmmakers, lingering and talking amongst each other, not far away from the Baobab, hoping to be called in. It took three FESPACOs for them to call me in. They call you in and they grill you. I think what was also really interesting about FESPACO then, it was a recreation of the dynamic of African societies. Everybody's invited for all ten days, and you go and you sit and you talk, you watch films but most of all you talk to each other.

PK: There's only a certain number of prizes and some money with the prizes.

JE-T: Yes, whoever won the Golden Stallion prize gained a credibility I think that is beyond the money.

PK: A sense of an affirmation.

JE-T: There are a couple of things I wanted to say just to contextualise. Don't forget that from 1955 (Bandung), until independence, the whole non-aligned movement and Tito and Nasser, especially, were very close to each other and both of them were massive cinema buffs. Nasser had a cinema built in the presidential palace and would watch a film every night. And Tito was the same. One of the famous Egyptian directors, who just died recently, was called Muhamad Khan, he was Indian. His family came from India, or Pakistan; it was pre-Partition India. I was telling you about all these different groups that constituted Egypt. Someone like Togo Mizrahi, for example. In 1945 he made a film called *Selemah*, another film by Togo Mizrahi is *Sons of Egypt* in 1933. Another really important guy in the post-revolution is Henry Barakat, a Christian. Henry Barakat did *The Nightingale's Prayer* (1959), which is an amazing film. Another film by him is *The Sin* (1965), which was in competition at the Cannes Film Festival in 1965.

Part 2

PK: Can we talk about what is taking place today?

JE-T: Currently there's an interest in Africa from outside. Mati Diop's film *Atlantics* is part of the shortlist for the Oscars. The French selection to the Oscars is *Les Misérables* by Ladj Ly, a son of Malian parents brought up in Paris. In 2018 *Félicité* by Alain Gomis was selected as the Senegalese entry for the Best Foreign Language Film at the 90th Oscars. There's an interest in the idea of diversity. Maybe it's a kind of polarisation, the resurgence of the right wing that makes some people look at Africa as an important anchor. So suddenly a lot of interest in Africa and a lot of interest in African cinema.

PK: Wasn't it the case that a few years ago there was a recruitment to the Oscars Academy of a number of people from Africa and the diaspora?

JE-T: In 2016 when there were absolutely no black faces. That's when I became a member of the Academy. It's like the whole of Africa and the darker races didn't exist and there was this real hoo-ha. Then they opened it up; not just Africa, people from the south in general. And they started recruiting women. That's when I went in. Maybe what is happening now is a result of it. But just

the idea that the French submission to the Oscars is a film whose director has Malian ancestry is quite something. I'm not saying that France has changed. 'Diversity' is the new word in town. Then there are initiatives like the one by the Robert Bosch Foundation called Follow the Nile, a German initiative, putting in a lot of money. There was a lot of concentration on Kenya. I don't know if the Nile arrived in Kenya; to my knowledge it was in Uganda and why Morocco is part of this initiative is also unclear. How they choose the participating countries I don't know. I don't think any of the changes that are happening changes the basic nature of how things work. We do not have funding structures and as long as there are no national funding structures on the continent these little sparks of hope will occur, but then will fade away. Now there are the streaming bodies like Netflix. Which are new doors of hope for the new generation who think, 'Okay, now we're finally breaking out of the cinema and the families that own the cinemas for ages.' So, the streaming platforms are changing things. But what they're also doing is they're taking over the films. They throw money at you and then require everything to fit their criteria. Our films now belong to platforms like Netflix or Amazon. Something just happened here recently in Dakar (Senegal). Mati Diop's *Atlantics* was being shown in the local cinema to a local audience. She was here and two guys from Netflix flew in with the digital file. Nobody was allowed to touch it; it was their property. On the continent, there's a new motion, a new awareness, something that we haven't seen before. We saw it in the early sixties but then it completely disappeared, we're starting to see collectives. Practically in every country there are collectives now basically saying we do not accept this game any more.

PK: There are a number of collectives here in South Africa.

JE-T: Yes, even in Libya, there's a film collective that are making films with very little means. They're making their own films in their own way. I think that this is the beginning of a rebellion against the structures. And on a personal level, one of the things the institution I am currently directing, DOX BOX, did earlier this year is that we, with the Tunisian CNCI [Centre of National Cinematography], thought, 'How can we do a South–South collaboration?' Chiraz Laitiri was the instigator and for once she had the power to implement. Even if we come up with a small pot of money, but at least we as countries are involved in our own films. We came up with this initiative called SENTOO, and it's the first South–South initiative that integrates countries from North Africa and currently countries from West Africa, but it's growing. So, it is Tunisia, Morocco, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger and Senegal. We've just finished the first year. We have four fiction films and two documentaries. All the training is done by people from the South. All the money is coming from the South, so it's just the beginning. It's a very tiny pot of money but at least it allows the filmmakers to get to the end of the

development stage from their own perspective, rather than being stuck with a Western perspective from the word go. So, there is hope – not only is there hope, there's a consciousness. In 2017 Alain Gomis's *Félicité* won the Silver Bear at the Berlin Film Festival and then went to become the first Senegalese film to make the Oscar's foreign film short ist. It was the trigger that made Senegal create a film fund called FOPICA. So the country said, 'Okay, let's think of a structure to get our films made.' And they invested in Mati Diop's film, and now Mati's film is at the Oscars as a Senegalese film this year. One of the reasons I'm in Dakar over Christmas is that last year Alain created the Yennenga Centre, a centre for post-production and for assisting young filmmakers in every kind of way. One of these is engaging with these collectives. We are collaborating whenever we can. There's a collective here in Dakar called Cine Banlieu which has existed for years. I come and chip in and do what I can. We're starting to create these little, not even hubs, they're tiny little centres where every one of us who believes that we can do it in our own way, with our own language, puts in their five cents worth. It does not exclude the North but we need to talk to each other eye to eye. We need to be partners. We can't just be aid-receivers.

PK: There are always strings attached to aid and usually they have funding cycles of three to five years. What happens when that ends?

JE-T: Precisely. I'm personally very hopeful. That's why I took this job as director-general of DOX BOX, which was initially just an Arab support, funding and training institution. And my argument was, 'Are the Berbers Arab? Are the Kurds Arab? They're not! which means that I can include the Peul and the Hausa. I am not obliged to stick to the limitations of colonial borders.' The board accepted my argument. Which means that I've managed to expand the area of connection. So, DOX BOX is founding partner in SENTOO, which fits into our programme which is about creating these bridges. I have spent 30 years of my life arguing against the North–South divide on the continent; you can't go by these unnatural borders. That's also part of why I'm in Senegal and part of why I'm working with Alain. We're creating collaborations in many ways, replacing the need for money. Of course, we can't live only on collaboration. But it means that the motor of what we're doing starts with the initiatives we come up with. And we can go a long way to knowing what it is we want to do, how the films are going to look, what the films are going to say before we open up and say, 'Okay, who wants to come partner and put in money with us?' So it's this building of partnerships now rather than the way it was in the 1980s and the 1990s where it was, 'If I don't get French money, I can't make my film.' There is a film that really excites me at the moment. It's called *Europa* by Kivu Ruhorahoza, a Rwandan guy, it showed at IDFA [International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam]. It is really interesting. Because it's not only about

breaking this cycle of dependency, but it's also about breaking the cycle of Western formatting. It premiered at a documentary festival but the film is practically fiction. You don't know if it's fiction, it's a hybrid form. Ruhorahoza was making this fiction film and he wasn't towing the line and so there was no money coming. At some point he said, 'Well, you know what? I'm doing my film anyway.' They created a collective in Rwanda and everybody chipped in. His film is absolutely magnificent, it's called *Europa* because it's the story of Kivu, a man seeing Europe through African eyes. So, there is hope, not only is there hope, there's a consciousness.

11

African Moving Image at the Intersection of Cinema and Television

A Conversation between Palesa Nomanzi Shongwe, Dylan Valley and Pervaiz Khan

Palesa Nomanzi Shongwe and Dylan Valley are contemporary South African filmmakers, lecturers and writers whose work represents the ongoing struggles to narrativise on big and small screens the experiences of South Africans during the apartheid and post-apartheid eras. Their voices represent the concerns of an emerging body of film artists carving spaces within the institutional framework of South African television and cinema for new modalities of storytelling, aesthetics and representation. In January 2020, Pervaiz Khan conducted a joint interview with Palesa Shongwe and Dylan Valley, both of whom were participants in the first symposium *Reframing Africa: Cinema and Modernity*, which was hosted at the University of the Witwatersrand. In this conversation these scholar-filmmakers discussed their individual histories of engagement with African cinema, its influences, the impact of South African television programming and the influences of African diaspora cinema in shaping their aesthetic sensibilities, their approaches to filmmaking and their current thinking about the institutional frameworks of South African television and the independent film sector.

Pervaiz Khan [PK]: Could we speak about what you were both watching as you grew up and how you came to watch cinema from other countries in Africa and the diaspora?

Palesa Shongwe [PS]: I remember mostly being exposed to television I think from probably about the late 1980s through the nineties. And most of what we were watching were American television series like *McGyver* and *Hunter*

because they were weekly and you kind of developed a ritual around them. I think there were a lot of South African produced black drama series, many of which had black crew and writers, that told stories about the black experience. But, when we watched TV at the house, my parents wouldn't let us watch those. I think it had to do with my parents being very suspicious of how black people are represented. I don't think they really thought it through or maybe they didn't communicate it to us specifically, but they were very selective over what kind of film or television we were exposed to. South African television was divided along language. And you had the basic language groups, had Zulu, Sotho and English and Afrikaans. We ended up watching a lot of English television. We watched the English news, we watched a lot of shows that would inevitably be from America, and only every now and again we'd have access to Zulu content. I think specifically my father has a lot of disdain towards television that was made for black people.

Dylan Valley [DV]: What were some of the shows?

PS: There were a few series – *Inkom' Edla Yodwa* and *Bophelo ke Semphego*, *Matswakabele*, some of those were Sotho and other Zulu. I don't remember all of them, but they actually marked a prolific moment for South African language-specific series. But we definitely were directed against them because my parents had a kind of suspicion towards things that were created for black people in the eighties or before that. I think it came from their exposure to Bantu Education and their orientation against it. So, I didn't watch a lot of South African television actually growing up. And it was much later, around the nineties, when the SABC kind of rebranded itself, that we were engaging with what I would call 'black television' and black images. Before then, it was really kind of being saturated in a lot of stuff that was English based and usually from the States.

PK: What cinema did you watch?

PS: My exposure to moving images was television primarily and every now and again we'd have access to a blockbuster, white American, Hollywood films. Even then, in the early nineties, black representation was very thin. So, we would watch kids' movies that would come out, like *Home Alone* and those kinds of things. We also watched a lot of Leon Schuster. As far as South African work was concerned, he was probably the most direct connection we had to South African cinema. It wasn't exceptional. It was only once I got into high school in the mid-nineties that things started to shift a little bit and I think that shift coincided with some shifts on South African television. South African TV started to play African films. There was actually an African film slot on Saturdays at 3:00pm. I remember it very clearly. And it was on SABC 3 or 2, so it was directed

at the genteel television watcher. Suddenly we had access to those things … In a way South African television was really quite provocative back then. I'm not sure what it's like now.

PK: In terms of your parents' attitudes once you were a bit older by the 1990s?

PS: Yeah, by then I guess we had the opportunity to choose for ourselves what we were watching. We still generally did not watch what in the house would be considered 'black things'. I think it's very interesting. And I think it comes from the context of my family being a little conservative and a lot suspicious. I think it's just a suspicion of things that are directed at, created for black people in the media. I didn't think about it then. It just felt like my parents were snobs and were very restrictive. But over time, I've started to think about what it might have actually meant for them. It was to kind of empty our lives of a certain type of representation. I think it was based on a deep misunderstanding because when I watch those things today, I see a lot of artistry and a lot of very daring image-making. But back then because it was coming out of a context of apartheid I think it may have been read differently by my parents.

PK: For you, what was it like watching Africans on screen the moment you had a chance to? Because obviously this is very different from a South African context.

PS: It really did hit … When you're a kid I think things hit you in fragments. And if you are lucky when you are older you reassemble those fragments into something coherent. But I remember when I was growing up, just a pre-teen, watching some things with my brother that were just strange. I remember this one film about a man who goes on some kind of journey and in order to cross a river he has to cut off his ear, and then his ear grows into a raft and then he's able to cross. It's really profound stuff when I think about it. And I never forget that scene. But when me and my brother saw it, we probably laughed for about an hour because it was so weird, so strange. What I do remember about those African films is that they were difficult to watch, they were long, and you didn't always know what was going on and it kind of frustrated a casual relationship with the screen. But I remember South African television starting to give access to things that were from the diaspora. Eventually, we'd get interesting black films from America too, and series like *South Central.* So, it started to shift as much more varied black representation was happening, still from the States, but every so often we'd also have access to African films.

PK: Dylan, what were you watching as you were growing up and what influenced you?

DV: When I was growing up, similar to what Palesa is saying, I was watching more TV. I think TV had a bigger impact on me than films did because we didn't really have much of film-watching or cinema. We didn't have a cinema-going culture in South Africa back then. We still don't have much of one now. I was just watching movies. It would be whatever was on TV and also watch stuff on SABC. A lot of the time the way that you think about South African movies, when you think about a movie as a kid, I was thinking about Leon Schuster movies. And I didn't really know South African movies outside of that. To me, that was a South African movie, whatever Leon Schuster was doing at the time.

PK: What did you make of that?

DV: My family was really into a lot of that stuff. People found it very funny. Some of what he was doing was quite subversive in that he was showing a lot of the racism that white people have by putting on black face, but he wasn't doing it in a very critical way. It was kind of like 'I'm going to show you how this stuff just skin deep, and then we'll laugh about it afterwards,' so not really challenging what's going on. It's just having a laugh, poking fun at the situation. For me, I thought it was a lot of fun, I just thought it was really funny. Only later on in life I was critical of what he was doing. But at the time it was great, I thought it was really funny. I actually remember going to watch *There's a Zulu on My Stoep*.

PS: The one with the elephant was hilarious. That thing was funny.

DV: That's the one with John Matshikiza, just kind of co-starring. I don't remember the plot except for when they do a racial swap. John becomes white and Leon becomes black, I don't know why. I remember them kind of doing this stuff. To me that was kind of movie-going. At the same time also, I remember watching stuff like *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* at the drive-in with my parents. It was kind of Hollywood stuff that I was really also interested in as a kid. Only later on was I exposed to other forms of South African cinema. I think the first time was during university. Before that I wasn't really watching South African cinema or African cinema. We got M-Net when I was a kid and then I started watching stuff like *Cry, the Beloved Country*. They showed *The Power of One* which was a struggle film, but it was centred on a white narrative. I can't remember who the main character was, but it was white people at the centre of the film. I remember there was a scene where someone gets killed in the movie, I think it was one of the white characters, I was really, really sad. And I didn't even realise why I was so sad at the time, but I just remember watching a movie with my parents and just crying, and crying, and crying. So that's pretty much all I was really exposed to as a kid growing up in terms of South African cinema or African cinema in general. And I remember seeing what you're talking about, which is the African

cinema stuff on SABC but I don't think I ever watched it. I remember seeing the promos and thinking, 'Okay, this is different,' but I never actually sat down on a Saturday to watch it. *Yizo Yizo*, for me that was a huge shift in South African TV. I think everybody felt that, not just me. I remember watching it and thinking, 'Wow!' [see Modisane 2013].

PK: Could you explain a bit more about it?

DV: It was a show that was created by the SABC.[1] I think its mandate was to educate and was centred around high school students and shot in Daveyton township. There were basically different things that these kids were going through as high school kids, these very intense life situations. Some of the characters were living by themselves in a shack. Two high school kids … they'd just share the shack by themselves. For me, it was the first time I understood what it was like to live in a township like that. Watching that stuff and just seeing how people live. They carry on and make plans and do things and they have to go to school every day but they have these very extreme conditions. And also, obviously other kids weren't going through such extreme conditions. Also seeing stuff like mob justice on TV for the first time. So, I saw a mob justice scene and it was one of the most intense things I've ever experienced on-screen: I was physically shaken by it. And everybody was talking about it at school the next day. Well, at least the black kids in my school because I went to a mostly white school. A school that had been previously whites only and had been desegregated but still had mostly white kids. If I remember correctly, I think maybe some of those white kids were watching because at the time SABC had a bigger reach. DSTV hadn't fully grasped all the middle class yet, I guess. To me that was really interesting. But also, *Yizo Yizo* had a cinematic approach to what it was trying to do. It wasn't making TV. It was trying to develop its own visual style and language. It wasn't just trying to replicate whatever people had been used to on TV, but it was doing interesting stuff with colour, grading, exposure, playing around with different camera techniques. And so, it was really trying to push the envelope aesthetically, which is also why I think it was so successful, and why people responded to it so well. Because it wasn't just this flat, kind of soapie approach to making TV. It felt edgy in the way that it looked. I think that

1 A weekly drama series in English and Zulu broadcast on SABC 1 (1999–2004) aimed at teenagers. It was based on research commissioned by the National Department of Education. The Department commissioned Laduma Film Factory to make the series. It was intended to get high school pupils talking and thinking about how to address problems in their schools. The filmmakers were Angus Gibson, Desirée Makgraaf and Teboho Mhlatsi. Note what Litheko Modisane (2013) has to say about the role of TV in South Africa's film industry with, particular reference to *Yizo Yizo* in terms of the audience created and the wide range of debate that ensued.

was also really cool about it and that's why the youth at the time responded to it so well. The show seemed to have a real understanding of what people were interested in, music like Kwaito. There was maybe even a bit of a music video aesthetic in some of the shows. So, it was really interesting in that way.

PS: I wanted to add that *Yizo Yizo* was also at the beginning of a particular era of South African television when the SABC and certain departments in the government were working together to create what they loosely termed edutainment. *Yizo Yizo* was one of the first of that kind of thing. I think *Yizo Yizo* coincided with *Soul City* (about HIV and health stuff). It's always interesting to compare the two of them because they were supposed to be doing the same thing. *Yizo Yizo* happened at the time I think the Education Department was trying to communicate around corporal punishment. And they were basically saying to the country, 'We no longer beat your children.' But they were also looking at the schooling system in general, at the legacy of Apartheid on education and unpacking that. I think Bomb Productions, Angus Gibson and Teboho Mahlatsi, working with a few other people, took the opportunity of turning something that was basically state-funded and remedial in some way, into something that took a lot of risks. The state couldn't actually resist. They were commissioned to do something that was within certain boundaries, that had a certain ideological intent, but they completely blew it open. And audiences were so insistent that I think the government couldn't get too involved. The commissioning editors couldn't really resist. I think at the time there were quite specific ideas that the national broadcaster took up – that, as well as entertain, they were going to educate black people around things like HIV. Which is reminiscent of colonial cinema, the way that colonial powers used cinema in Kenya and South Africa and all across the continent. Like how the mining industry in South Africa used the moving image to inculcate and propagandise. Basically, as kind of an ideological tool. Some people used that tool very bluntly and some people used it very sharply. I think *Yizo Yizo* was that interesting example where the money is there because of one thing, and then you create something that-beautifully subverts its own intention.

PK: So, television had an impact on both of you as you were growing up, more so than going to the cinema. In the 1980s there were a number of white filmmakers working with black creatives to make films. This way of working continued into the post-apartheid period. There was a period from the 1980s into the early 2000s that you mentioned earlier – could you touch on some of that and who was involved in that?

PS: Teboho Mahlatsi, who was one of the makers on *Yizo Yizo*. He also had a project with M-Net for young, emerging, black filmmakers to make short films. He made a film called *Portrait of a Young Man Drowning*.

DV: It's an amazing film.

PS: Also, a pretty radical film. I think you can see a lot of *Yizo Yizo*'s style there as well, very raw. By the time he was coming up, people like Teddy Mattera and a few youngsters, mostly black men but not limited to them, were coming into the process of filmmaking and you knew about them somehow. And you become aware of them as people who have a voice that was celebrated in a way. I think they were spoken about as the 'hot new ones'. Some of them went into commercials directing. But for a while there was a crop of fresh voices, black voices, that M-Net and all these broadcasters were suddenly aware of and talking to. I think, for me, that implied the possibility, and at first it was just an idea, okay kind of the glamour of it, of being a director. Because they seemed to be quite glamorous and very mysterious. They seemed intellectual and creative and had a command of this language that felt quite exciting. Ramadan Suleman adapted the short story for the screen. It ended up on South African television. And I remember it was quite an intense PR moment because I think it's the first time you watched black people, a black couple, on television having sex. I remember that quite specifically. And so, for a while people were talking about it being radical. Actually, I remember there being a response to it, a kind of conservative reaction to a question of what they're putting on screen, how we were representing ourselves and 'Why show young people doing this?' etc. And the counter-argument being always, 'This is reality. This is what people are going through. And this is what cinema in South Africa is supposed to do. It's supposed to represent the real, it's supposed to be real.'

PK: So, the point that we touched on previously was that a layer of younger white filmmakers emerged in the 1980s. Filmmakers who were making progressive films which were challenging the status quo in different sorts of ways. So, these ranged from *Shot Down* (1986) director Andrew Worsdale, *Mapantsula* (1988) by Oliver Schmitz, *Jerusalema* (2008) director Ralph Ziman; *Tsotsi* (2005) director Gavin Wood was probably the last of that sort of film.

PS: I'm going to be careful because I don't really know the precise details and history of this. But my understanding was that people emerged out of politically involved leftist white communities in Johannesburg, Durban and Cape Town. People who had been journalists and had been involved in cinema. The production company I worked for at the start of my career was a small company. They started mainly doing documentary films that were funded by the factual branch of the SABC. The intention was to recoup untold South African stories. Some of the people from this post-1994 period now run some of the largest production companies in South Africa. For example, there was Mail & Guardian Television, which after many different incarnations has become Quizzical Pictures. It's

interesting that we're talking mostly about television so far, because we've had this intersection between television and South African cinema for a while, as far as I understand. I was only aware of South African cinema through television. Those guys, in the mid to late-nineties, came into television through their experiences and their involvement in leftist politics in the eighties. And after that I think they then formed their production companies on the basis of that first sort of influx of state money for documentary and drama content. Eventually, I suppose because of the logic of growth, these become the companies that are making mostly telenovelas today. It's a very interesting evolution. Those then become the people at the beginning that have the infrastructure, have created the companies and so on. And then younger filmmakers like Teboho Mahlatsi join up with an Angus Gibson and Desiree Markgraaf as executive producer, where they become co-creators and directors of *Yizo Yizo*. So, the younger generation gets mentored and incubated in these organisations that exist because of an earlier involvement in leftist or liberal journalism.

PK: Although Britain in the 1980s and 1990s is a very different place to South Africa, there are some structural similarities in terms of what happens in Britain in the eighties. Black workshops emerged through funding from Channel 4. But alongside those were several major production companies that were run by white left progressives with social and class confidence and strong industry connections.

PS: I think the model in South Africa was about employing black people for authenticity – this is the cynic in me. If the idea is to make more real representations then you get more black people into the writing rooms and so forth to authenticate.

DV: Palesa, what you're getting at is that most of those films of that period were made by white directors. You had producers who brought in black people almost as consultants. They would do a lot of the co-writing themselves. And they would do a lot of the work of actually writing the stuff. They were brought in basically to authenticate. Even a film like *Mapantsula*, there is Thomas Mogotlane who co-wrote *Mapantsula* with Oliver Schmitz, he was also basically a co-director. He was directing actors and a lot of that story was his own lived experience. So, his contribution was huge but he wasn't really acknowledged. He became an alcoholic later in life. Black people weren't acknowledged for their contribution to South African cinema and weren't able to actually build a career out of the work that they had done.

PK: They couldn't capitalise on it in the same way as white directors, writers and producers. Shifting the terrain. Which films had an impact on you in terms of your own work? And, also, which diaspora work impacted you?

PS: I think going to an American film school was key to that. I've since talked to a few people that went through graduate school in the USA. It might differ for different spaces. But, if you're looking at more independent-minded film schools, they do touch a lot on what can be spoken about as the independent movement in the UK and in the US. They can't then ignore black filmmakers and the emergence of black cinema. In South Africa, I think there is a history of black people making cinema all the way back to Lionel Ngakane. I think the difficulty is exactly what Dylan is pointing to – the model where you work with a white director or white producer then you get eclipsed by that politic. We don't necessarily teach or track the evolution of African or black filmmaking because historically, it happens within that model. There were some people who made black cinema for black audiences in South Africa outside of this model. Not many, but we had Ngakane, and Simon Sabela, who made *uDeilwe* in 1974. I think the shift happened around the late-nineties, early 2000s. When the NFVF [National Film & Video Foundation], and other institutions, are very directly looking for black filmmakers and the black voice. They are looking to fund those filmmakers independently of their relationship to white production companies. Although, it would happen that you would have to partner up with an experienced production company or an experienced producer, which sometimes meant you were working with those established white companies. But those relationships and that model eventually became something less or exploitative if it ever was. Then we see filmmakers like Vincent Moloi and Lodi Matsetela come up. They are relatively young. Some have been at this game a long time; Teddy Mattera, Palesa Letlaka, Zoliswa Sithole for instance, had been making their own work. By the early 2000s that was becoming real. In terms of my own personal process, I think I came into an understanding of cinema —of moving away from this burden of representation towards an understanding that cinema is not just a medium of representation. Prior to that, my philosophy of film and philosophy of the moving image was informed by the view that cinema is about 'representation' for black people. It's about presenting black people to the world because they'd either been deeply misrepresented or not represented at all. That philosophy I think carried *Yizo Yizo* forward. This idea of showing the 'real' for me worked as the basic argument for what I thought film and the moving image is about. Then, when I got to film school, first, it reinforced my intuition that the 'real' is a very complicated idea and second, that cinema isn't just about representation. I saw the ways in which filmmakers in the Black Audio Film Collective were treating cinema. As much as they were interested in reality, they were really stretching the aesthetics of cinema. It was very exciting, the possibility that you didn't just have to represent but you could do other things with blackness. That blackness wasn't just something to be described; when blackness comes into cinema it can break apart aesthetics, it can break apart the rules. I really loved that. That completely changed the reason I wanted to make films. I wanted to make films for all kinds of other reasons but

by the time I left film school I understood that there was a movement of cinema in the diaspora that was thinking about these things differently. And now when you look at, say, the work of Arthur Jaff, Jenn Nkiru or Terence Nance, I think that's what they recognise: This is metaphysics as cinema, it's philosophy as cinema … It's more complex than representation. This excites me.

PK: Dylan, what was your experience of that?

DV: Well in my case going to film school at UCT [University of Cape Town] and watching *Do the Right Thing*, seeing what Spike Lee was doing with cinema was an important moment. I guess he's a lot more traditional with the cinematic references. But still there was a certain aesthetic that he was engaging with. Breaking the fourth wall and having characters turn to the camera and addressing the viewer directly. His use of fisheye lens and wide-angle, lots of movement and colour, was really exciting. It was the first time I had seen that. The reason why I wanted to get into documentary was Lindy Wilson's documentary class. She was a South African leftist who made documentary films, very political films during apartheid. She documented District Six in Cape Town being demolished and made a film called *Last Supper in Hortsley Street*, which is about the last family to leave District Six. She documented their removal and the destruction of the whole neighbourhood. Because of the Group Areas Act which declared District Six a white area. She documented that and put it on film, really heart-breaking footage.

PK: How did you get to see films from the rest of Africa? Palesa mentioned earlier about watching African films on SABC.

PS: The first time I got to watch *De Voortrekkers* was when I got to film school, but I think that's because I only studied film when I went to the US. I think I might have encountered it earlier had I done film here in South Africa. The truth is that a lot of the exposure to African cinema happened in my case when I was outside of the country. It was not inevitable. I think there were people who would have taught me these things, shown me these formative images, if I'd gone to film school here. I don't want to make it out to be that I had to leave the country to start to watch African cinema, but it happened that way. I think some people would have had a different experience.

PK: The point you are making is that you would have only got to see films from other African countries in South Africa in a film school context. It's not as if there were regular screenings of African cinema at the multiplex or arthouse cinema spaces.

PS: We can say that with confidence.

DV: For me too it was only through university that I actually watched cinema from outside of South Africa.

PS: It's taken me a very long time to actually understand why I'm making films. It's taken me since 2007 when I first decided to be a filmmaker. It's taken me almost 13 years to make that argument clear and to make sure that it comes from a very real place and to see other filmmakers who seem to be approaching filmmaking from that place as well. And obviously because of the way that things are structured you need to have kind of made an argument for yourself as an emerging filmmaker. If you're over 35 you're no longer apparently at the beginning stage when it comes to proposals and applications. It's taken me a long time.

PK: What has happened is that they've adopted policies from the North. Which is not surprising as a lot of funding comes from outside. So, what happens after you reach 35? The Egyptian filmmaker Jihan El-Tahiri makes the point that it takes at least two probably three films before you can start to see it is a body of work or the beginnings of a body of work.

PS: Jihan is right. I've spoken to Lodi Matsetela about this as well. Lodi and Vincent Moloi made the series *Tjovitjo*, which in some ways is comparable to *Yizo Yizo* because it signals the next movement of daring television filmmaking in South Africa. They were quite revolutionary in the way they made *Tjovitjo*. Yet, even they continue to face the very difficult reality of always having to start over. Always having to convince funders. Another filmmaker, Mpumi Mcata, pointed this out to me – how you are planted in the ground, so to speak, then you get harvested and then there's no replanting, you don't get put back in the soil. There must be a constant new crop of filmmakers that are being harvested, without being put back in the soil. This is how I would describe the experience of being a black filmmaker today – sometimes this feeling of being always about to make it, constantly being about to begin and therefore always being at the beginning. We all end up being in that continuous state of emergence, and sometimes get suspended in it.

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12

A New Becoming: Towards an African Time-based Media Practice

Reece Auguiste

> An event is something that brings to light a possibility that was invisible or even unthinkable. An event is not by itself the creation of a reality, it is the creation of a possibility, it opens up a possibility. It indicates to us that a possibility exists that has been ignored. The event is, in a certain way, merely a proposition. (Badiou 2013, 9)

In response to French philosopher Alain Badiou's discourse on the epistemic formation of the 'event', which he defined as a critical moment in a broader historical process of political becoming, fellow philosopher Fabian Tarby probed Badiou to expound further on this idea. Badiou proposed that the 'event' is de facto a manifestation of a historical shift which finds its most salient concrete expression in the possibility of a transformation in the field of political action. More specifically, Badiou defined the 'event' as the enunciation of a political gesture whose logos produces the ordering of a rupture in the historical fabric of society. Meaning, that rupture is the 'thing' that announces the presence of a possibility and unleashes the logic of a new political becoming. Although, Badiou delineated the event in terms of the eruption of a possibility whose fundamental character is *political*, I believe there exists an epistemic opening for this category to move beyond strictly political procedures to embrace a more expansive field of possibilities. One such possibility is the logos of art, culture and aesthetic production. It is in this latter sense that the 'event' as an analytical category is being deployed in the context of African moving image art.

What is this new 'possibility' that has broken out of its dimly lit chamber to enter into a luminous space to strip away invisibility in order to render into sharper focus the evolution of a new and necessary moment in moving-image arts practice in Africa? If the 'event' is the unfolding of a constitutive process, which signifies the arrival of a new historical conjuncture, then the confluence of these conjunctural forces speaks to a fundamental cultural shift. Since the advent of moving-image art in Africa, motion picture production practices have been determined by the apparatus of the single channel platform which proposed the potentiality of the moving image as well as its limitations, both of which are rooted in the technological affordances of the cinematic apparatus.

The transnational emergence of innovative platforms of moving-image production has shifted the terrain of cinematic representation to create space for a parallel movement of multi-channel platforms and multi-screen practices. As a result, a radically new way of being, thinking and doing has emerged to produce neoteric artistic practices and an aesthetic consciousness commensurate to the demands of this new 'event'. Implicit to the 'event', whatever its historical or epistemic character, is a fundamental questioning of all that preceded it and all that currently exists in form, structure and substance. The 'event' by its very nature is concrete, self-reflexive, dialectical and yet critical of the configuration of historical forces which constitutes its formation and propels it towards the affirmation of a new constitutive historical moment. The 'event' is essentially the transformation of the moving image in Africa from its single channel-based episteme, generally referred to as 'African cinema', to a multi-screen ecosystem that goes beyond current audio-visual practices. The 'event' as conceptualised by Badiou is a proposition predicated upon a possibility that was once hidden but has now become visible. Integral to this proposition is the emergence of new epistemologies of moving image practice globally, which poses a fundamental question concerning Africa's location and relation to multi-media art practice. To embrace this 'event' necessitates a critical awareness about new possibilities; in fact it calls for a radical rethinking of moving-image art in Africa. In opening up new spaces of operation the 'event' gives potential to the formation of radically new systems of image production that are grounded in the architectures of time-based art. This is the constitutive historical conjuncture through which the development of African moving-image practice in the twenty-first century and the terrain upon which African moving-image artists must now operate.

An engagement with time-based media arts does not imply a refutation of African cinema. To the contrary, it is imperative that recognition be given to the monumental achievements of African cinema and those who have struggled under adverse institutional and economic circumstances to make it the historical phenomenon that it is. While pushing African moving-image art into new epistemic directions we celebrate and continue to learn from films such

as *Borom Sarret* (or The Wagoner [1963]), director Ousmane Sembène; *Touki Bouki* (1973), director Djibril Diop Mambéty; *Mortu Nega* (Death Denied [1988]), director Flora Gomes; *Fad Jal* (1979), director Safi Faye; *Yeelen* (1991), director Souleymane Cisse; *The Silences of the Palace* (1994), director Moufida Tlatli; and *Timbuktu* (2014), director Abderrahmane Sissoko, among many others. The aesthetic achievements of these African filmmakers are a testimony to triumph over adversity and, while we celebrate their ferocity and fierce cinematic imagination it is also incumbent upon current and future moving-image artists to not only build on this achievement, but to also take African moving-image culture into new directions.

Constituted within the complicated interstices of moving-image technologies, film manifestos and policy declarations, African cinema practices have historically assumed the hegemonic vantage point from which the messy, contradictory and convoluted matter of colonial and postcolonial historical consciousness has been explored, its representation constructed and African identities interrogated, deconstructed, moulded and reconstituted. In the interface of modernity and representation, cinema in Africa has been the dominant refracting mirror in which African filmmakers have laboured to produce films of social, political and artistic relevance.

None of these achievements existed in a vacuum because in the process of establishing African cinema, its practitioners had to out of necessity initiate film manifestos, political declarations of intent and resolutions that not only collectively defined the political and aesthetic parameters of African cinema, but also instituted its ideological precepts, historical function and philosophical objectives in the project of decolonisation. It is not happenstance that dictates that the following documents are today considered seminal in the formation of African cinema: Resolution of the Third World Filmmakers' Meeting, Algiers, Algeria, 1973; The Algiers Charter on African Cinema, 1975; Niamey Manifesto of African Filmmakers, 1982; Final Communique of the First Frontline Film Festival and Workshop, Harare, Zimbabwe, 1990; and Statement of African Women Professionals of Cinema, Television and Video, Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, 1991 (Bakari and Cham 1996).

These historical documents suggest that African filmmakers and other stakeholders have performed a tremendous task in building institutional capacity for the realisation of film production in Africa and the dissemination of African cinema across the continent. This is not an argument for the primacy of cinema over other art forms such as African literary poetics, but rather a salient recognition that the cinematic apparatus has impacted Africans in ways that the richness of African literary discourses probably has not. One of the many reasons for cinema's ascendency in the African public sphere is its ability to reach audiences in ways that the novel, short story or play cannot do. In addition to the cinema's propensity for spectacle and representation, it has an

innate phonetic capacity that allows national audiences to hear the phonetics of their mother tongue on screen, be it Bambara, Wolof, Mossi, Twi, Yoruba or other African phonetic forms. In response to the cinema's inherent capability to communicate in African phonetic idioms, the renowned Senegalese director Ousmane Sembène noted:

> I've just finished another book, but I think it is of limited importance. First, 80% of Africans are illiterate. Possibly only 20% of the populace can possibly read it … my movies have more followers than the political parties and the catholic and Moslem religions combined. Every night I can fill up a movie theatre. The people will come whether they share my ideas or not. Personally, I prefer to read because I learned from reading. But I think that cinema is culturally more important, and for us in Africa it is an absolute necessity. There is one thing you can't take away from the African masses and that is having seen something. (Peary and McGilligan 2016, 14–15)

And yet, the question of language, literacy and access to which Sembène alluded is not specifically confined to African literary discourse. African cinema too has had challenges in this arena due to regional differences, linguistic diversity across the continent and even the existence of such differences within the borders of nation states. African cinema has from its inception grappled with the diversity of linguistic and phonetic structures on the continent, for example a film in which the dialogue is in Wolof may encounter problems in Mali where at least 89 per cent of the Malian population speak Bambara as either a first language or second language. In recognition of this communicative problem Sembène addressed the relationship of African cinema to language in the following terms:

> Given the fact that there is such diversity of languages in Africa, African filmmakers will have to find a way to transmit a message that will be understood by everyone. Perhaps we'll have to find a language that comes from the image and from the gestures. I think I could go so far as to say that we will have to go back and seek inspiration in some of the silent films. (Weaver 2016, 17)

Sembène's utopian yearning for a cinema of choreographed gestures is indicative of a profound language issue that the moving image in Africa may never fully transcend but gestural acts could certainly be integrated into expanding the canvas of African signifiers within the social machinery of representation.

The system of physical movement alluded to by Sembène, if adopted, could expand the repertoire of performance practices in African cinema. It is the opening

of a possibility for the evolution of innovative moving-image art practices within geographical, cultural and historical spaces on the African continent, one in which the performative takes precedence over speech and becomes the signifier or the conduit through which desire and the human condition are expressed. Whether or not gesture could become the de facto index of signification by replacing verbal speech, which has been central in the evolution of film since the arrival of synchronised sound (talkies) in the form of *The Jazz Singer* (1927), is of little importance here. Of greater philosophical significance in this debate over language in African cinema is Sembène's ostensible faith in the ontology of the image and its power of gestural signification within African cultural spaces. It should be noted that the Soviet director Andrei Tarkovsky also expressed a profound confidence in the image though for different reasons from those expressed by Sembène. On this question Tarkovsky was adamant that:

> The image is indivisible and elusive, dependent upon our consciousness and on the real world which it seeks to embody. If the world is inscrutable then the image will be so too. It is a kind of equation, signifying the correlation between truth and the human consciousness, bound as the latter is with Euclidean space. We cannot comprehend the totality of the universe but the poetic image is able to express that totality. The image is an impression of the truth, a glimpse of the truth permitted to us in our blindness. The incarnate image will be faithful when its articulations are palpably the expression of truth, when they make it unique, singular – as life itself is, even in its simplest manifestations. (Tarkovsky 1986, 106)

If Tarkovsky's affirmation that the image 'is an impression of the truth', then Sembène's proposition for an African cinema of physical gestures articulated through the ontology of the image points to another possibility that has yet to be explored. In this case, a cinema in which its prescriptive grammar, its rules of signification and truth procedure are expressed through gesture and physical movement without recourse to indexical speech. This also opens up the possibility of extrapolating the moving image from the existing paradigm of phonetic space into new territories of visual representation circumscribed by a language of physical gestures. Given that cinema in Africa is not necessarily immune from the dominant epistemic tradition of filmmaking practices and modalities of representation such as realism, it is imperative that African filmmakers evaluate their practice in *relation* to the cinema and emerging paradigms of moving-image art. This demands that African filmmakers must now begin the process of engaging with radically new ways of expanding the epistemic canvas of representation within moving-image culture.

The emphasis on *expansion* proceeds from the premise that the cinema is not primed to disappear, it has not affixed its gaze into the abyss of erasure, its

death is not imminent, as Martin Scorsese and Ridley Scott recently pronounced (Epstein 2018). The fact that the Hollywood machine has run out of innovative ideas, hamstrung by plot-driven narratives, computer generated images (CGI), a bloated star system and unsustainable fiscal structures is not Africa's problem – though the dumping of its movies on African cultural markets is a continental-wide problem that continues to impact the African imaginary and perpetuates the strangulation of indigenous distribution networks for African cinema.

Cinema in Africa will no doubt continue to endure the curse of foreign imports, continental-wide institutional challenges and the cultural indifference of African governments whose proclivity for European/American cinema outstrips their interests in investing in viable production infrastructures, distribution networks and exhibition spaces. This situation is further compounded by African cinema's historical dependency on European funding and other foreign ancillary support structures which have certainly contributed to the crisis in film production on the continent. In the current neo-liberal-driven postcolonial environment these are the immediate existential threats to African cinema as an ongoing cultural and aesthetic concern. However, despite these perennial problems there are other avenues of moving-image practice that do not have to depend on familiar economic production models and should be vigorously pursued. It is in the current postcolonial milieu that African film artists must explore the possibilities and affordances of multi-channel/cross-platform production practices and develop aesthetic forms that are commensurate to these digital platforms (Handhart 2008, 2–8). Such a shift would also result in modalities of representation that are substantially different from those of the cinema. To construct radical non-linear systems of representation that can be deployed across several screens simultaneously means a reconfiguration of the figurative, symbolic, allegorical and metaphorical, as well as the temporal and spatial in African moving-image art. This is not a rallying cry for African moving-image artists to jettison the cinematic medium or filmmaking paradigms of the twentieth century, though there is much in those paradigms that should be discarded.

Rather, it is recognising that the old familiar terrain of moving-image practice is undergoing a seismic shift that will ultimately recalibrate the conditions of moving-image production in Africa. This realisation is borne out of a concretely objective interpretation of transnational media arts movements that have repeatedly foregrounded the technological and epistemic limitations of cinema, even in the digital era. The rapidly changing landscape of image production which consists of video installation art, interactive video installation and virtual reality/immersive media demands expansion of the canvas of representation beyond the single channel model of twentieth-century motion picture arts. The integration of these platforms into national and transnational contemporary art practice is a concrete manifestation of ongoing seismic shifts in moving-image culture. To understand the *zeitgeist* of contemporary moving-image

practices, it is imperative to evaluate cinema's historical trajectory in Africa and why it is now prudent to address the current impasse. The urgency of this moment is predicated upon the need to develop cultural spaces in which to explore our collective colonial and postcolonial experiences and to do so in ways that do *not* have to be confined to a singular modality of moving-image production and representation. Therefore, the invariable histories of colonisation, racial commodification, social exclusion and cultural objectification that have informed African cinemas' critique of the West and the detritus institutional fabric of postcoloniality must also constitute the raw materials of a historical consciousness from which to construct a new episteme of the moving image – aesthetic, symbolic and allegorical – with which to critically engage the precarity of the contemporaneous moment.

Evidently, Africa's historical encounter with modernity is one of immense social, cultural and institutional complexity. As a philosophical, political and cultural movement modernity stretched across African geographical boundaries and in the process impacted Africa's multifarious cultural formations. As a result, the social tissues of African identity formation were ontologically reconfigured, transformed and re-inscribed into the African social order in ways that remain key determinants in the era of postcoloniality. The racial categories that underpinned this historical encounter and which continue to greatly determine not only contemporary perceptions of Africa, but also its social and political relations with modernism and its citizens' ontological presence, cannot be lightly overlooked.

It could be argued that cinema, as one the central pillars of modernity, served the colonial project but its apparatus has also been deployed by Africans as an instrument to critique and deconstruct its economy of racial othering. However, the cinema's emergence across the continent is characterised by uneven development, differentiation in infrastructural capacity, variation in cultural and historical specificity as, for example, those that exist between North African cinema and West African cinema, which run the gamut from Ousmane Sembène's contemporary allegory *Xala* (Wolof for 'temporary sexual impotence' [1975]) to the Egyptian Youssef Chahine's historical epic *Saladin* (1963), or for that matter Tunisian Moufida Tlatli's *The Silence of the Palaces* (1994).

Differences also exist in cinematic approach *within* geographical regions such as in West Africa where Djibril Diop Mambéty's formalist experimental non-linear films *Badou Boy* (1970) and *Touki Bouki* (1973) stand in contrast to the Bambara-infused symbolism in Suleymane Cisse's historical epic *Yeleen* (Brightness [1987]) or Idrissa Ouedraogo's *Yaaba* (One Who is Born on a Thursday [1989]). These films, though an infinitesimal sample, pose profound epistemological challenges to the generic category of African cinema because, as a descriptive concept, it assumes a metaphysical unity of form and an epistemic singularity that refutes cinematic and aesthetic differences within the socio-cultural framework of African moving images. Though this category

carries a descriptive power that functions as a floating signifier for African cinema, it does not articulate the historical specificities of the moving image in local, national and regional spaces on the continent.

It is this propensity towards a metaphysical unitary framework that has prompted British Ghanaian film artist John Akomfrah to call into question the categorical singularity that has come to define the materiality of cinema in Africa. Akomfrah's cautionary remark should be noted for its philosophical insight into a problem that has now assumed legitimacy:

> I think certain distinctions have to be made before you can even begin to talk about this. The first being that one should talk of African cinemas, in the plural, rather than about an African cinema as a kind of genre. But these are distinctions one makes with qualifications. For instance, it seems to me that the generation of the great 1960s pioneers, like Hampate Ba, Ousmane Sembene and Lionel Ngakane, were clearly very consciously working with, and for, an idea of African cinema but without ever forgetting that they were each working in quite specific locations. (Akomfrah 2006, 274)

Akomfrah's insistence on delineating epistemic distinctions shifts the premise upon which the discourse of the moving image in Africa has historically rested; it allows for a critical analytical inquiry into the formation of the moving image that is commensurate to historical and geographical specificities and cultural differentiation. The act of inserting plurality as the central operational axis of moving-image discourse produces a space for the inscription of critical reason which not only recognises difference, but also acknowledges a broader spectrum of possibilities and modalities of aesthetic judgements. Therefore, African cinemas as a recalibrated concept speaks to the significance of multiplicity and plurality of African engagements with modernity through the apparatus of the moving image. It is evident that Djibril Diop Mambéty's *Touki Bouki* (1973) and Moufida Tlatli's *The Silence of the Palaces* (1994) represent radically different points of entry and aesthetic engagement with the cinematic apparatus. Therefore, the African cinematic corpus is constituted through the specificity of cultural histories, film practices and aesthetic proclivities. Confronted by a cultural nexus of cinematic forms, the monolithic that is implicit in the term 'African cinema' collapses under its own metaphysical weight. It is for this reason that the inherent descriptive signifier in African cinema can no longer hold and that the enunciation of African cinemas in the plural opens new vistas of knowing and of being. And, herein lies the medium's historical complexity in relation to the inscription of modernity in the African public sphere. Despite its plurality of forms, cinema/moving-image art in Africa cannot escape the inscriptions written on its body – the inscriptions being the colonial and postcolonial

phantoms imposed upon it – race/racial difference is the spectre that hovers in and around its social body. In every African nation state where cinema exists, even in its most underdeveloped form, the ontology of the African subject and its representation is at its centre.

One cannot speak of African cinemas or even invoke the concept of representation as it pertains to Africans without also recognising that African ontology in relation to modernity is the object that is reposed on the postcolonial pyre. Therefore, of greater significance are the ontological struggles to deconstruct the historicity of the European gaze and the concomitant histories of white colonial and postcolonial narratives. Essential to this struggle are the reordering of sonic forms and moving-image epistemes capable of decentring/dismantling the corrosive effect of racial commodification and the constitutive structures of the hegemonic order of bio-power. Social philosopher Achille Mbembe stated that:

> It can be said of race that it is at once image, body, and enigmatic mirror within an economy of shadows whose purpose is to make life itself a spectral reality. Fanon understood this and showed how, alongside the structures of coercion that presided over the arrangement of the colonial world, what first constitutes race is a certain power of the gaze that accompanies a form of voice and, ultimately, touch. (Mbembe 2017, 110)

To argue that cinema in Africa is marked by the discourses of race or that it is the embodiment of the inscriptions of a racial cultural economy is to also acknowledge that in its early years cinema had a formidable structuring presence in Africa. First, as a cinema of attractions designed to fulfill the demands of the European psyche and the micro-granular desire of the colonial imaginary and, later, cinema as a more technologically developed apparatus in which sound, image and editing techniques constituted, consolidated and expanded the canvas of European perceptions of African subjects as an economy of signs, racial tropes and objects of an unfolding discourse of racial ordering.

The cinematic apparatus was *the* optical machine for the projection of European narratives of racial difference and as such it functioned as if it were a refracting mirror, a social machine for the reconfiguration of the African body according to the logic of the colonial imaginary. Another dimension of cinema's encounters with race was its specific form and structure within African diaspora cultures in Europe, South America and the USA. Nonetheless, cinemas of the African diaspora as cultural process and form tend to exist on the margins of the discourses of African cinemas, and films that have emanated from the diaspora have not gained acceptance in the African moving-image canon.

There is a need to rethink this idea to account for the contributions of African diasporic film artists to the general discourses of African moving-image culture.

We should note that cinemas produced by Africans in the diaspora are also integral to that larger rumbustious transnational narrative of cultural dispersion and engagement with the political formation of the ontology of African subjects both within and outside the continent. This conceptual framework is aligned with a broader history of Pan-African political and cultural movements stretching back to the 1800s. In the spirit of Pan-African visual representation, it should be noted that African artists in the Western hemisphere were also pioneers of African cinematic representation, and at least in one known case preceded Sembène's *Borom Sarret* (1963) by at least eight years. That was Paulin Soumanou Vieyra' s 1955 ground-breaking 21-minute short film *Afrique-sur-Seine* (Africa on the Seine) in which Vieyra explored the cultural alienation of African migrants (artists, workers and students) in Paris; and, South Africa's Lionel Ngakane's seminal work *Johnny and Jemima* (1962), which explored racial conflict in the wake of the British race riots in 1958 (Pine 1988, 29).

Though *Africa on the Seine* addressed the existential experiences of Africans in Paris and *Johnny and Jemima* focused on racial strife in the aftermath of a race riot within a Caribbean community in West London, both films are clearly concerned with black life in the African diaspora. Therefore, Vieyra and Ngakane's films speak to the interstices of African transnational historical experiences produced through race, migration, ontological dislocation and cultural dispersion. Given that the concept of African cinema was conceived in narrow epistemic terms, Vieyra and Ngakane's diaspora cinema categorically calls into question what actually constitutes an African film. The notion that only motion pictures produced/directed by Africans in Africa qualify as African cinema is profoundly epistemologically flawed. A cinema rooted solely in the physical and cultural cartographies of the continent may well serve legitimate ideological projects within Africa, but when the argument is couched in those terms its effect is to exclude the transatlantic experiences of Africans in the diaspora and the moving images that they construct to articulate those experiences. In addition, the long-term implication of this argument is an unacceptable epistemic closure that serves to short-circuit the representation of African transnational experiences and what those experiences might mean for the continent; in fact, it is an episteme that delimits its own possibility. The question, therefore, is this: Where should we place Lionel Ngakane and Paulin Vieyra in the pantheon of African cinemas? It should also be noted (as a related issue) that the language one should deploy in discussing the historical location of *Afrique-sur-Seine* and *Johnny and Jemima;* or for that matter *La Rue case Negres* (Black Shack Alley) *by* director Euzhan Palcy (1983); Sankofa Film and Video's *Dreaming Rivers,* director Martina Attille (1988); *or* Black Audio Film Collective's *Testament,* director John Akomfrah (1988), has not been sufficiently addressed in relation to the discourses of African moving-image art.

These are conceptual and epistemological problems that emanate from within the specificity of the African diaspora, but the terrain upon which they must be resolved goes beyond the diaspora. Indeed, the epistemic resolution that we seek must occur within the materiality of African transnational space itself, in which the African diaspora remains a central determinant.

Another related issue in Africa's encounter with cinema pertains to the phenomenology of the imperial gaze, its power to structure, fix and regulate the social body. It is generally agreed that prior to Ngakane's *Vukani* (Wake Up [1962]) and Sembène's pioneering film *Borom Sarret* (1963), cinematic representations of Africa were largely structured by the imperial gaze which placed Africans under a regime of panoptic representation. Glenn Reynolds states that:

> Given the potency of visual representation – both in its visceral appeal and its function as a handmaiden of colonial forms of power and knowledge – it was no accident that fearful European colonial administrators in the first half of the 20th century had intentionally restricted the development of a class of African directors … although a few Africans were, in fact, sporadically handling cameras or otherwise assisting film crews before independence – an important phenomenon often overlooked today and an issue to which I return – these individuals were never given the chance to fully develop their own film stories and were never in complete control of the medium until the push for independence. (Reynolds 2015, 4)

Concomitant to the structuring power of the imperial gaze in ethnographic cinema, were its meticulously constructed narrative discourses that served to flagrantly deny African social agency a legitimate space from which to operate. In Jean Rouch's ethnographic cinema, which is located between the colonial cinematic enterprise and the emergence of the postcolonial moment, the imperial gaze is fully operational – though less so in his seminal work *Moi, un Noir* (meaning 'me, a black' [1958]). Rouch's cinematic practice began in the late colonial period and continued through the post-independence era. An accurate assessment would be to view Rouch as a European transitional figure in Africa's encounter with cinematic modernity.

As a result, Rouch embodied the historical contradictions of the transitional period from colonialism to the postcolonial that somewhat explains the unevenness in his film corpus in Africa. This contradiction, epistemic unease and bewilderment was evident in Sembène's and Rouch's 1965 contentious exchange about practices of ethnographic cinema on the continent. The essential substance of this historical confrontation sought to address the question of who has the right to represent Africans and how.

The following excerpt encapsulates the essence of this exchange:

Jean Rouch [JR]: I'd like you to tell me why you don't like my purely ethnographic films, where I show traditional life, for example?

Ousmane Sembène [OS]: Because something is being shown, a certain kind of reality is being constructed, but we don't see any kind of evolution. What I have against these films and what I reproach Africanists for, is that you look at us as if we were insects.

JR: As Fabre would have … I am going to come to the defense of Africanists. These are men that we can accuse, of course, of looking at black men as if they were insects. But Fabre, for example, discovered that ants had a culture that was equal to and had just as much significance as his own.

OS: Ethnographic films have often done us harm …

JR: That's true, but that is the fault of the filmmakers, because we often do our work poorly. And it doesn't mean that we can't offer important testimonies. You know that ritual culture is starting to disappear in Africa, the griots are dying. We have to record the last living traces of this culture. I don't want to compare them to saints, but Africanists are like a breed of unhappy monks, in charge of collecting the last scraps of an oral tradition that is in the process of disappearing and which seems to me to be of fundamental importance.

OS: But ethnographers don't only collect the stories, the legends of the griot. It's not only about explaining African masks. Let's take another one of your films, for example, Les fils de l'eau (1958). I think that a lot of Europeans watching this film don't understand it, because initiation rites have no meaning for them. They find the film beautiful, but they don't learn anything.

Beyond Sembène's discourse on authenticity and Rouch's defense of the ethnographer's good intentions, it is evident that Rouch the European modernist was incapable of extricating himself from the very colonial narratives that he sought to critique in his work. The power of colonial discourse to fix the African body, to render it an object of the imperial gaze and to deny the agency that Sembène craved for African subjects were the determining factors in Sembène's assessment that ethnographic cinema has a tendency to look upon Africans as if they were entomological objects.

Sembène's critique of Rouch was based on the fact that for several centuries Africa had been the object of a structuring European gaze that not only failed

to acknowledge the linguistic, cultural, historical and ontological complexity of African subjectivities, but also promoted a discourse of representation that articulated the imperial order, empire building and institutional governance of African subjects. It is the constitutive elements of the gaze that structured an epistemic system of visual representation that were to underpin imperial epistemologies and fixed African subjects as objects of cultural regulation within the imperial symbolic order. This regulatory practice imposed limitations on the African subjects' ability to narrativise its existential position and to give voice to the complexity of African historical consciousness as it interfaced with cinematic modernity.

Cinema is one of the most formidable cultural and technological instruments of modernity. Yet, in the early years of the medium's development prior to the interventions of the pioneers of African cinema, the denial of the vernacular and technological apparatus of motion picture arts to Africans resulted in the strangulation of an African cinematic sensibility grounded in the continent's linguistic and cultural specificity. From the cinema's inception in 1895 to the first light of decolonisation, Africa's inscription into the cinematic medium as a producer of moving-image art was more or less absent. The point being that, despite the efforts of the Tunisian Chemama Chikly to produce African films, Africans largely remained the objects of representation. Mbye B. Cham states that:

> Although Africans in a few parts of the continent (mainly in Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia, South Africa and Senegal) were exposed to cinema from very early on, within five years of the invention of the art form, the practice of filmmaking by Africans on a significant scale is a relatively new phenomenon on the continent. Even though the first film made by an African, a short by Chemama Chikly from Tunisia entitled *Ain el Ghezel* (The Girl from Carthage) dates back to 1924, and even though Egyptians have been making films since 1928, it was only in the latter part of the 1950s and the start of the 60s, following political independence in many countries, that we began to witness the emergence of a significant corpus of films produced and directed by Africans. (Cham 1996, 1)

This history suggests that for approximately the first 60 years of filmmaking practices, Africa and Africans were predominantly objects of European cinematic representation at best the continent was a geographical canvas against which Europe dramatised its colonial desires and fantasies about the black body. There are two sides to cinema and modernity in Africa: cinema as a product of the modernist imagination and the invention of African cinemas by Africans with a very specific set of political and aesthetic concerns.

Therefore, reframing African cinema through the lens of modernity suggests that cinema in Africa cannot disentangle itself from the medium's epistemic limitations, its production platforms and even pronouncements in the West that cinema is dead while still retaining the label 'cinema' as a form of self-legitimation. Cinema across the continent is susceptible to all the current epistemic malaise that has befallen this dominant platform of image production, such as funding, its commodification, distribution challenges, and unpredictable audiences who have other cultural interests and platforms from which to access moving images. African film spectatorship is not a guaranteed phenomenon and with the introduction of streaming platforms and mobile technologies audiences are far more fragmented than many would have anticipated ten years ago.

The questions are: How must cinema artists and critics in Africa address this problem? How best to extricate African cinemas from this increasing cultural malaise? Clearly, the perpetuation of existing production models and narrative forms, including the Aristotelian three-act structure, is unsustainable. Cinema in Africa is at a crossroads, a historical conjuncture, a space from which it can either continue with the philosophy and modalities of practice of its key architects or it can reconstitute itself and strive to expand the canvas of audio-visual practices. French philosopher Alain Badiou refers to the 'event' as a moment of restructuring of the social, but the 'event' also offers opportunities to reinvent the self in relation to the emergence of a new social. It is a vision of radically new horizons of possibilities. Badiou's philosophy of the event holds great significance in the context of the future of African moving-image arts. In relation to the event, the possibility that it proposes and its significance for a new ethos, Badiou states:

> It proposes something to us. Everything will depend on the way in which the possibility proposed by the event is grasped, elaborated, incorporated and set out in the world. This is what I name a 'truth procedure'. The event creates a possibility but there then, has to be an effort – a group effort in the political context, an individual one in the case of artistic creation – for this possibility to become real; that is for it to be inscribed, step by step, in the world. (Badiou 2013, 10)

In the 1960s, there were two events which presented distinct, yet not mutually exclusive, possibilities for African moving-image art. First, a cinema rooted in African epistemologies and aesthetic sensibilities, and second, video installation practices that were in their early ascendancy at precisely the same time that Sembène and other African pioneers were laying the foundations for the moving image in Africa. The former opened the possibility for the emergence of African cinematic practices led by African writers, production designers, cinematographers, technicians, performers, producers and directors. The latter,

experimental video art installation, never really registered on the continent in the 1960s, though it had become a thing elsewhere on the globe.

Therefore, it is not surprising that the moving-image platform embraced by Africans approximately 60 years after its invention was cinema. Simultaneous to the adoption of cinema as the medium of artistic expression in Africa, the emergence of the French New Wave, New German Cinema, Brazilian cinema novo and Third Cinema were making new demands on the medium. Those filmmaking practices, broadly defined as art cinema, had a profound influence on African filmmakers and certainly were a key determinant in Djibril Mambéty's cinematic sensibility. And in tandem with art cinema, video art installation emerged as an alternative and production platform pioneered by, for example, the Korean artist Nam June Paik, and Americans Bill Viola and Woody Valsuka.

The key determinants of video art installation were the modernist art movements of the early twentieth century such as Dada, cubism, Russian constructivism, surrealism, abstract expressionism, minimalist art, conceptualist art and the futurism of the Italian poet and theorist Filippo Tommaso Marinetti (Kolocotroni et al. 1998). Video installation art, as a precursor to contemporary multi-media production practices, was a composite fusion of the art produced by these movements; namely, painting, sculpture, photography, experimental cinema and performance art. This interdisciplinary approach to creating moving-image art remains its core principle today.

In the 1980s, when video art installation had established itself as a major moving-image paradigm, there was not one African media artist that I knew of who was exploring the aesthetic possibilities of video installation on the continent. Souleymane Cisse, Ousmane Sembène, Gaston Kabore and Safi Faye among others, were the de facto models for moving-image practices in Africa. Therefore, while those filmmakers were struggling to establish a viable cinema culture, they were either not aware of video art or they could not conceive of its potential on the continent. The absence of Africans as writers, sound designers, producers and directors of video art installation or even in its current manifestation of multi-screen projection spans almost 50 years. Meaning that Africa has for the most part been operating behind the curve of video art practice grounded in abstraction and experimentation.

Though this historical assessment may appear insensitive to some, we should pause to note that this pronouncement is not hyperbole but rooted in historical fact. Its facticity is incontrovertible; the time has arrived for African moving-image artists to look beyond the cinematic apparatus and to take the necessary steps to expand the platforms of moving-image production and representation. Though Africa's delayed arrival at the table of cross-platform production could be viewed as a deficit, it would be prudent to view the current situation as an event, in Badiou's sense, and one which poses immense possibilities for the future of moving-image art in Africa.

A feature of this event is the increasingly blurred distinction between filmmaker and video artist that has become a reality as artists are producing work for exhibition on both platforms. As moving-image technologies become more pervasive and affordable, the workflow of moving-image production and distribution has fundamentally changed the cultural landscape of representation. As a result, a greater number of artists have embraced both cinema and video art as viable production platforms. It is this convergence that led John G. Handhart to write:

> Today the dialogue between film and video artists has increased as the electronic medium has become more pervasive and artists have begun to work in both fields, while at the same time acknowledging the unique properties and differences that distinguish these media. (Handhart 2015, 19)

In the African diaspora, an exponential number of media artists have embraced the possibilities offered by multi-media platform production and are exploring new territories of representation. Among this growing cadre are John Akomfrah whose multi-layered three-screen video installation *The Unfinished Conversation* (2013) traces the philosophical, cultural and geographical journey of British cultural theorist Stuart Hall from Jamaica to the United Kingdom, and the various journeys back and forth between those geographical regions; Steve McQueen's *Ashes* (2015) about how the black body is defined by colonial labour, histories of Caribbean postcoloniality and the ramifications of neo-liberal globalism; and the African American photographer and multi-media artist Lorna Simpson's three-channel video installation *Chess* (2013). McQueen, the director of *Hunger* (2008) and *Twelve Years a Slave* (2013), continues to work on both platforms.

It is in this evolving transnational context of practices that we must rethink the narrow epistemic framework that has come to define African moving-image art. The reframing of African cinema presupposes the reinvention of moving-image art in the twenty-first century but any reinvention of its form and content will be constricted by its single channel format. Cinema in Africa must now seek to co-exist with other moving-image-making platforms, one of which is video installation art practices. This is an opportunity to finally establish a mixed economy of moving-image art in which cinema constitutes one modality among other modes of practice.

There now exists an urgent need to stretch the canvas of production to accommodate video abstraction, interactivity and sound installation, and to create a spectrum of exhibition spaces – from the gallery to the site-specific – as venues in which to watch and debate emerging work. Only in doing so, will the history of the moving image in Africa traverse beyond the narrow precepts of cinema to explore

the affordances of multi-platform production practices. The constitutive elements of this new ethos are abstraction, text, sound, video, animation and photography placed in juxtaposition to each other across two, three, four, five or six screens. The key determinants for the inscription of this platform in Africa are:

1. Digital sound and image technologies – cameras, audio recorders, editing and colour correction software.
2. The utilisation of mobile technologies for the production, distribution and reception of content on streaming platforms.
3. Multi-screen projection/display technologies for generative video installation.
4. Sound installation technologies – computers, sensors, kinetic devices.

The proposed shift from African cinemas to multi-media production platforms also necessitates the formulation of a new moving-image episteme and new ways of being in relation to artistic production. This entails that African moving-image artists embrace emerging digital media-making tools and techniques commensurable to emerging paradigms of practice capable of producing time-based work on multiple platforms with a view to exhibiting such work in art galleries, museums and site-specific spaces such as the side elevation of public buildings.

The success of this epistemic shift requires the training of a new cadre of moving-image artists grounded in the philosophical, theoretical and technological principles of video art installation production practices. This would entail the following considerations:

1. A radical rethinking of the college/university curriculum that goes beyond the paradigm of film studies.
2. The integration of innovative multi-media pedagogy grounded in African histories, cultures of performance, texts, digital video, and sound.
3. The initiation of an interdisciplinary curriculum in which students explore the connections between the moving image, sculpture, painting, performance, sound and archives.
4. The implementation of curatorial studies in colleges and universities across the continent.

All the aforementioned arguments are predicated upon a recognition of the event as a structuring process in the becoming of a new artistic form in Africa. Badiou states that:

> Artistic mutations are great mutations that almost always bear on the question of what counts, or doesn't count, as forms … An artistic event is

> always the accession to form, or the formal promotion of a domain that had been extraneous to art … the artistic event is signaled by the advent of new forms. (Badiou 2013, 68–69)

To reiterate, African moving-image artists exist at the conjuncture of a historical event in contemporary arts practice, one in which innovations in sound, image and video projection technologies have produced new production platforms and systems of representation. This paradigmatic turn has resulted in fundamental epistemic shifts in knowing and doing, it has reconfigured the aesthetics of the moving image and recalibrated the hearing subject's position in relation to the metaphysic of sound.

These new configurations have repositioned the viewing subject in relation to audio-visual representations of history, the materiality of culture and have generally reconstituted the phenomenology of the moving image in ways that have radically reshaped our collective consciousness of moving-image art and aesthetic appreciation. This episteme traverses beyond the hegemonic idea of an African cinema, a moving-image practice, which has deep roots in twentieth-century cinematic forms, to offer social spaces for multiple inscriptions of an African time-based moving-image ecology with a critical metaphysics of art and creative practice, commensurate to the historical consciousness and contemporary experiences of Africa's new becoming.

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13

Opening the Way for Further Readings and Reframings

Cynthia Kros, Reece Auguiste and Pervaiz Khan

The contributors to this volume have demonstrated through a multiplicity of interpretive frameworks the complexity of cinema, modernity and Africa. To varying degrees these frameworks traverse historical, political and cultural approaches to understanding the history of cinema practices in Africa and, more specifically, the shifting ideological and economic terrain of their historical evolution. In the process of doing so, the contributors have reflected upon and delineated Africa's encounters with the moving image and the contradictory, sometimes contested relations that cinema has historically posed for Africa in the realm of cultural representation. What follows is an exploration in greater detail of the epistemic themes, ideas and social contexts that have been addressed in preceding chapters. This endeavour acknowledges the manifold levels upon which the very idea of *Reframing Africa* is predicated and to some degree how these levels are indeed key determinants in its social operations. It is a reframing in which its operations are centred on excavating the many cinematic practices that have contributed to the visual structuring of Africa and the invention of Africa as a European construct. It is this epistemic construct that has propelled African moving-image artists to not only engage with cinema as a medium of representation, but also to contest the epistemological terrain upon which it has been based historically in relation to Africa.

First, it would be prudent to take note of Sylvia Wynter's (2000) observations and emphasis on the central importance of the relationship that emerged between cinema and the colonial project. Although Wynter was not the first social philosopher to delineate this symbiosis, her analysis underscored its ideological materiality and the contested relationship that ensued following from cinema as an apparatus of modernity and colonialism. It is the recognition of this phenomenological process that led Wynter to insist that 'no medium was to be more effective' in advancing the logic of colonial conquest and the systems of ideological governance than the cinematic apparatus (Wynter 2000, 29). Wynter's emphasis on the operations of this medium opens up a vector for analysis of the medium's specificity, its forms of affect and how its inextricable connection to multiple colonial projects secured and promoted a racialised visual episteme.

It is the materiality of the medium, the relative autonomy of its ideological frameworks and its concomitant body of cinematic techniques that underscore the explicit intention as indicated in preceding chapters, which is what the authors of this volume have endeavoured to avoid, namely instrumentalist readings of the cinema's encounters with Africa.

In tandem with the rapid technological development of the medium, it is evident that pre-cinematic representations of Africa were inscribed in the formation of the cinematic apparatus, structured film narratives steeped in colonial perceptions, and generally determined the regime of cinematic forms, film techniques and modalities of representation – precisely the structure of the medium that Wynter spoke of.

To circumvent instrumentalism entails giving primacy to the relative autonomy of the cinematic apparatus and its procedural rules of audio-visual production – in other words, allowing for a critical appreciation of what it is that makes it the 'most effective medium' and, occasionally, how its historical location vis-à-vis its structures of representation paradoxically placed it in the vanguard of significant change, a shift that was only made possible because of epistemological breaks within its own regimes of representation. For example, the emergence of the postcolonial moment not only represented an epistemological break from colonial conceptual frameworks, but also catapulted African filmmakers into becoming cultural critics and agents of change in the realm of cultural representation.

The contributors to this volume have been mindful of ideological reductionism and are adamant that the goal is not to conceive of cinema simply as doing the work of empire, as if it were merely a mechanical ideological arm destined to project the underlying logic of imperial governance and racial excess. Indeed, as we have seen, Chapter 4 calls and makes a case for a deeper analysis of the materiality of the medium in relation to its historical location in Africa. It argues for an appreciation of the relative autonomy of the moving image that nevertheless does not exonerate cinema from its complicity in the colonial enterprise.

One of the persistent questions pursued in previous chapters asks: if cinema were complicit in the colonial enterprise, why is it necessary to continue to study films of that era? Surely, it is generally known what colonial cinematic narratives have to say about Africa and Africans. Therefore, what is the point of including this film corpus in a transformed decolonial film studies curriculum?[1]

However, what if, as Bâ, Malcomess and Shongwe all argue to varying degrees, while cinema retained its overall complicit relationship with colonialism in its various forms, the cinematic medium also opened pathways for assuming different and even oppositional readings of colonial representations? This raises the question: is it possible to read the large body of contested colonial films in ways that European filmmakers did not intend? In other words, readings and interpretive acts that go against the preferred or expected readings assigned by the systems of colonial governance. And if so, what might such readings look like? Evidently, this question speaks to the contestations between the medium's materiality, its modes of audio-visual representation, and the unpredictable, slippery and anarchic practices of colonial-era film spectatorship. The multiple ideological positions that exist within the practices of spectatorship suggest that film reception practices always exist outside the filmmaker's control. As a result, the spectator's agency allows for the possibility of interpretive readings of the moving image that may be essentially oppositional, potentially subversive or at least incredulous.

Although not explicitly addressing film, African reception practices, it could be argued, as Maty Bâ has, are philosophically aligned with the idea of developing scholarship that can present alternative readings of existing film texts in the academy. Implicit in this strategic alignment are the epistemological implications for film studies when African cultural experiences of the moving image are brought to bear upon the pedagogical intentions of film studies. With attribution to Derrida (2008), Bâ in Chapter 6 adopts an approach that is critical of film studies orthodoxy. He points to the problems of the 'knowledge systems' that currently hold sway in the academy, reminding us of the class nature of their ownership and the ideologies consequently embedded in them. He considers what resources African experiences and philosophies can bring to film studies to expand its vernacular, while being mindful that there is no fixity of ideas. Indeed, Bâ makes some recommendations for specific texts that might be studied towards the reconfiguration of existing epistemologies within the field of film studies. But, he also makes a hugely generative plea for relocating films

1 Although see the points made following Rice (2019) about the changes in colonial film representations, shadowing and sometimes anticipating the broader ideological and material changes in the administration of empire. It is useful to study colonial films to appreciate the nature of these sometimes quite radical changes. In this chapter we also come to other reasons for the value of studying colonial films; see the discussion of Sandon's analysis (2000).

made in the colonial era in the sense of undoing their myth-making. Elsewhere, he illustrates how one can invert the intended meaning, even of *De Voortrekkers* (Shaw 1916), a film widely recognised as a sustained endeavour to mobilise Afrikaner nationalism largely by contributing to white paranoia about putative historical injustices and notorious instances of supposed black 'savagery' (see Bâ 2014).

New departures/new readings

At this juncture, it is worth noting a few considerations about further exercises that might be undertaken in reading and rereading films as audio-visual texts, which fit into the framework of critical pedagogy, one of the goals of this book and the wider project of *Reframing Africa*. The call for new readings is predicated on the idea that such readings might recover undisclosed African agency or provide challenges to the dominant myth-making, as we see in the case of Bâ's reworking of *De Voortrekkers*. New readings may also deepen our understanding of a particular phase of colonialism or the relationship cinema had to other colonial institutions of governance, surveillance and control.

Although interpretations of several films are advanced below, many of which fall under the rubric of the colonial archive, the overall aim is to encourage multiple readings, even readings that go against those expressed in this book. All readings should, however, be well-grounded in a precise understanding of changing historical contexts, cinematic techniques *and* epistemological shifts in colonial modes of representation. In the spirit of critical dialogue, we proceed, conscious of Bâ's warnings about oversimplification and generalisation and simply accepting what may well turn out to be interpretations rooted in epistemological orthodoxy. Meaning, the affordances of new readings have the potential of bringing forward radical reinterpretations of colonial representations of Africa – readings, that not only go against established orthodoxy, but interpretive acts that can produce a new body of critical evaluations capable of positioning Africa in different epistemic frames.

In Chapters 5 and 6 by Malcomess and Shongwe respectively it is necessary to offer cultural context and historical background to what it is that these chapters, which deal with film in early twentieth-century South Africa, are in dialogue with, as well as, to acknowledge some of the scholarship that has preceded them and to which, to some measure, the two authors are responding.

First, we turn to the important issues of cultural context and historical background. The need to know what else was happening in the cultural sphere when films such as *De Voortrekkers* were being made is imperative for an informed understanding of the conditions of cultural production. The troubling epistemic relationship that colonial cinema had with what was then the relatively new discipline of anthropology has been analysed by several scholars

in noteworthy studies. It might be observed that cinema's complicity with the colonial project is sometimes most evident in anthropological (or ethnographic) films, although some ethnographic cinema practices have also been critical and self-reflexive of anthropology and its objectives, in particular those studies that objectify or attempt to classify African subjects as a distinct species that should be studied as if they were 'insects', to use Sembène's term (Prédal 1990, 86).[2]

For an original historical interpretation of cinema's relationship with ethnography in the early twentieth century, we refer readers to Emma Sandon's (2000) essay, which offers a seminal analysis of two colonial-era ethnographic films, *Nionga* (1925), made by British missionaries in Central Africa, and *Stampede* (1929), by Major and Stella Court Treatt. Sandon's inquiry focuses not on whether these films are authentic representations of African life – here she goes against a tradition of ethnographic film scholarship that seeks to establish the fidelity of the image to the real – but on how the architecture of moving images in *Nionga* and *Stampede* speaks to a larger ethnographic discourse, a regime of ethnographic signs, symbols, colonial fantasies and desires. Sandon extends her inquiry to explore the location of these films within the broader cultural practices of their period so as to make the connection between ethnographic cinema and other cognate practices, such as the emergence of the museum as a site of colonial representation and the cinema's relationship to exhibition and ethnographic performance practices.

Importantly, in view of the points that have been made about grasping the implications of the specificity of the cinematic medium, Sandon (2000) notes that *Nionga* utilised techniques of the silent cinema, such as intertitles, tableaux vivant, natural light, static camera shots, pans, tilts, cuts and fades – these are all cinematic strategies that construct and secure diegetic and non-diegetic representations. The advantage in placing the emphasis on the arrangement of cinematic techniques is that spectators are able to find space to reflect upon the inscription of cinematic devices in the construction of African subjects. Focusing on the ontology of the *filmic image* and its *codified discourses* in relation to identity formation opens up more epistemic space. It allows more space for thinking through these constructions. As will be seen, it becomes possible to utilise that additional space to think about the role of affect, gesture and sensation as central devices in the construction and movement of images through a network of imaginary and non-imaginary processes.

In addition to Sandon, for useful insights into the co-existence of early cinema with early ethnography, see the work of film scholar Tim Rice (2019),

2 In the French original: '*c'est de nous regarder comme des insectes*' (Prédal 1990). See further in this chapter a citation with reference to Auguiste's chapter in this volume of the famous words uttered by Ousmane Sembène in a 1965 interview with the French ethnological filmmaker Jean Rouch as a comment on the latter's approach.

who focuses on 'instructional' films produced in the first part of the twentieth century, especially those produced by the British Colonial Film Unit, itself an arm of the Empire Marketing Board. Established in 1926 to promote inter-imperial trade throughout the realm, the Empire Marketing Board launched the Colonial Film Unit in 1927 headed by Stephen Tallent and John Grierson. The unit produced, distributed and exhibited films such as *Drifters* (1929), *Windmill in Barbados* (1933) and *Song of Ceylon* (1934) among the 200 films it produced before its dissolution in 1955. In addition, the British government sponsored the Central African Film Unit (CAFU), established in 1948 with a regional focus. Initially serving Northern Rhodesia, Southern Rhodesia and Nyasaland, CAFU targeted its instructional films to African audiences. Following the formation of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, CAFU was incorporated into the Federal Department of Information and charged with making propaganda films for this new geographical entity. This is indicative, on a much smaller scale, of how colonial ethnographic films served to sustain the British Empire. This was notably also the case in the period after the Second World War, as the empire sensed that it was beginning to lose control of its colonial territories. In fact, Rice (2019) argues, the makers of films for pedagogical purposes, whether within the metropole itself or designed for audiences abroad (and sometimes both) showed a considerable capacity for shifting and reshaping their objectives and representational strategies as they were needed. Rice sees very serious consequences for postcolonial Africa in the way in which the films he analyses sought to prepare the 'ground for independence' (Rice 2019, 2).

Interpretive readings of the colonial film archives

While Rice (2019, 6) notes that many of these films have since landed back at 'the imperial centre', it should be acknowledged that with the advent of internet technologies, social media platforms, and the proliferation of websites devoted to archival storage and distribution, films that were once buried in the inner sanctum of physical buildings no longer technically exist only in the 'imperial centre', meaning that the archival holdings in European metropoles are now accessible from any geographical location with internet capability. It is this digital decentralisation of the archives that has made access possible in a way that it had not been in the twentieth century. In that regard, there are many useful and accessible British sites where these films are available for viewing. Among these are the Films for the Colonies site at St Andrews University, British Film Institute's Colonial Film: Moving Images of the British Empire and the European Film Gateway site. It bears repeating, however, that the films that now constitute the colonial film archives are not unmediated filmic and sonic representations of Africa. They should always be viewed as objects primarily produced through European constructions and perceptions of the continent, and secured

via the materiality of the medium's techniques and forms. It is precisely at this level that the work of critical interpretation and deconstruction of its operations should begin.

For pedagogical purposes, it is recommended that Bettina Malcomess's Chapter 5 be read in conjunction with watching several films of the same genres for the purpose of honing observation skills and comparing epistemic and aesthetic shifts over time, identifying the aims of the filmmakers in response to ideological and historical changes in imperial governance practices.

A film produced slightly later than one of those Malcomess analyses, namely *K.A.R. Signals: A Film of Routine in a Remote Place* is *A Mamprusi Village* (1944). Although it is not discussed in Malcomess's chapter, it is nonetheless particularly useful for making comparisons with *K.A.R. Signals*. Although some technological advances made by the time of *Mamprusi Village* are evident, there is a distinct similarity in the way in which the vast extent of the land is implied through camera movement in *Mamprusi Village*. Behind the opening credits, it pans over swathes of varied terrain – always suggesting that there is much more that cannot be seen. An important element to note in *Mamprusi Village* that distinguishes it from *K.A.R. Signals*, is that viewers are invited to witness the villagers in a setting largely without conspicuous signs of white surveillance or control. In *Mamprusi Village*, it is stressed that the villagers have a 'strong tribal organisation' and advanced local government with wise chiefs who are in possession of detailed legal knowledge. Without these features, it is implied, indirect rule would be unable to function. The district commissioner pursuing a remote supervisory role is glimpsed only rarely. If we follow Rice's argument, it can be seen that the road to self-government is being laid, although it must be stressed that it is supposed to be a long one, to be followed judiciously. Refer to Rice (2019) for his argument about how instructional films in this period turned away from their previous concerns to dealing with the empire in decline and growing calls for independence. Again, multiple readings of these films are possible and readers are invited to conduct their own readings, interpretations and conclusions.

The location of the African presence in colonial cinema

Despite what has been said about the complicity and agility of cinema in the service of the colonial project, the authors of this book, as previously suggested are not interested in representing Africa and Africans only as objects or as victims of empire. Firstly, the authors presented here affirm Africa's insinuating presence in cinema from its beginning and make the claim that the history of world cinema cannot be written or articulated without its African components (see Chapters 3 and 4 in this volume by Sanogo and Bâ, respectively). Africa and Africans were a cultural and social presence in cinema from its inception,

even if the representations of African subjects were inscribed in the cultural and physical geography of Lyon, London or Cairo.

Of greater significance is the role of African labour in the production of these films either as guides or assistants. This idea is of tremendous importance, given that the production of early actualities/ethnographic films within Africa relied extensively on the collaboration of Africans as assistants, local language translators, and logisticians whose knowledge of regional topography, cultural practices and ritual enabled Europeans to navigate through unfamiliar social terrain. African collaborative practices with European filmmakers in the early years made it possible to produce films in cultural spaces that might have been less accommodating had it not been for local support. As a matter of urgency, historical inquiry and analysis should also seek to address, as Sanogo pointed out at the 2017 *Reframing Africa* conference, films made by the Lumière Brothers in Cairo – such as *Pont Kassr-el-Nil* (1897), *Place Soliman Pacha* (1897) and *Place la Citadelle* (1897); and in Paris, films such as *Negres en Corvée* (1896), *Baignade de Negres* (1896); and in Lyon, *Ecole de Negrillons* (1897), *Danse du Sabre 1* (1897), *Danse de Jeunes Filles* (1897). In other words, racialised depictions of Africans in the cinema's early actualities raise questions about the complexities of European encounters with Africa and of African agency in the context of the production of these moving images.

The explicit objective of the authors of this book (especially Bâ and Shongwe), as we have seen, is also to experiment with the re-inscription of colonial films in the broader histories of the moving image in Africa; to explore new modes of reading and interpretation that are different from the way those cinematic texts were intended to be read. For example, historical inquiry might address the questions of whether there were codified signifiers for viewers inscribed in the diegesis of colonial films and, if so, how audiences within the colonies might have interpreted those codes. Generally, in early colonial cinema Africans were depicted as villains, 'savages' or faithful servants. But, looking at the South African actors who have played one of those in famous succession of nineteenth-century Zulu kings, Shaka kaSenzangakhona, Dingane kaSenzangakhona or Cetshwayo kaMpande, we know that they used the opportunity to subvert ideological expectation in portraying historical figures whom they considered to be heroes and champions of their people. What then has remained of their representation that can still be recouped?

The film *De Voortrekkers* (1916), as noted in one of Bâ's transgressive studies (Bâ 2014), is nearly always analysed in histories of South African cinema – see, for example, Jacqueline Maingard's (2007) chapter in her book *South African National Cinema*, and Neil Parsons's (2013) essay in the *Journal of Southern African Studies*. Maingard's project was to examine the defining moments when filmmakers in South Africa attempted to 'invoke a sense of the "national"' (2007, 3). Her interpretation of *De Voortrekkers* is built on this premise, although

it is important to note that Maingard's conception of the national is associated with an idea of identity, which sees it as essentially 'porous' rather than being something fixed and impervious (Maingard 2007, 3).

Maingard characterises the work of filmmakers throughout the period she studies as seeking to attain a national position or a position that is partial, but from which the protagonists try to broadcast a national narrative. For Maingard, *De Voortrekkers* is one of the earliest attempts to do this. Parsons's approach is similar. He draws on theory developed in the field of left-wing academic history from the 1970s onwards that sought to explain how Afrikaner nationalism was able successfully to recruit adherents, despite some potentially deeply divisive class conflict among Afrikaans speakers in the early twentieth century.

It is a useful exercise to analyse *De Voortrekkers* by reading off the biographies of its makers – particularly since Isabel Hofmeyr's work (1988), which firmly re-directed attention to the role of Gustav Preller. He was the script writer both for this film, and in a larger sense in the making of the Afrikaner nation. According to Hofmeyr (see also Moodie 1975 and O'Meara 1983), Afrikaner nationalism in this period had little to do with the consciousness of the nineteenth-century protagonists involved in what subsequently came to be called the Great Trek, and this would also apply to the events at the so-called Blood River (*Ncome* in isiZulu) where the battle between Dingane's *impi* (regiments) and the trekkers took place in 1838. Afrikaner nationalism was a distinctive product of modernity. It came into existence only towards the end of the nineteenth century and proceeded to flourish under dedicated curatorship in the decades after that.

One can pinpoint *De Voortrekkers*, as Parsons does, on the timeline of the development of extractive mining capitalism and the kickback against English capital that was sustained by bitter memories of the South African War roughly a decade before. The irony was, of course, that the scriptwriter of Afrikaner history *par excellence* in the shape of Preller had little option but to collaborate with industrial magnate Isidore Schlesinger, who had established African Film Productions Ltd in the Johannesburg suburb of Killarney (*De Voortrekkers* was one of the company's first films) and director Harold Shaw who was American by origin but who had recently lived and worked in Britain.

The ambiguities and tensions behind the making of *De Voortrekkers* are explored by Maingard (2007) and Parsons (2013), with Parsons suggesting that they were resolved through a number of compromises. For example, Portuguese scoundrels were substituted for the English mischief-makers Preller had wanted to have poisoning Dingane (in a metaphorical sense) against the trekkers at the beginning of the film.

Naturally, many analysts of *De Voortrekkers* have focused attention on the way in which Dingane and his warriors are represented. The late Bhekisizwe Peterson usefully contextualised *De Voortrekkers* within the field of other like-minded feature films of the time made in South Africa between 1916 and 1940

(Peterson 2003).[3] He invoked vivid imagery: 'The African entered the narrative frame as a one-dimensional subject, always as the amoeba-like Zulu ogre, who served to signify the horrors that needed to be conquered and domesticated if the aims of the empire were to be achieved' (Peterson 2003, 44).

It is true that there is much that is ogre-like about the overweight (to some viewers' eyes) and suggestible Dingane of *De Voortrekkers*. And the amoeba imagery resonates with what used to be the standard school textbook graphic representation of rampant Zulu expansion across southern Africa, sending the original inhabitants fleeing in all directions. This flight, conventionally known as the Mfecane, with King Shaka as its engine, supposedly created large tracts of empty land on which the white émigrés could then settle with impunity.

Bâ's Chapter 4, as we have seen, suggests it might be possible to open the way for a radical new reading or 'relocation' of a film like *De Voortrekkers*. Building on what Bâ proposes (and taking Parsons's [2013] analysis into account), which owes much to the analytical approach known as historical materialism, as has been suggested, it would be quite possible to argue that the film at least partially exonerates the Zulu king. He is shown as acting murderously against the trekkers, but only because the two white mischief-makers had put it into his head that the Great Trek (the migration of Dutch-speaking farmers away from the British government at the Cape) was a deep offence to 'tribal' loyalty.

As it happened, Afrikaner nationalists and Zulu nationalists alike valued tribal loyalty. Thus, it showed extreme shrewdness on the part of the English/Portuguese rascals to sow trouble between them by casting aspersions on this, one of their common, most cherished principles. A claim that periodically appeared right up to, and beyond, the publication of historian Hermann Giliomee's (2003) cleverly framed 'biography' of the Afrikaner people, is that at a fundamental level Afrikaners and black South Africans understood and respected one another's aspirations to be recognised as sovereign nations. Things only went wrong when other parties interfered with the nature of things or sowed discontent among black people.[4]

Notably, in *De Voortrekkers* there is also the character of the faithful Zulu servant, Sobuza, who after the massacre of Retief and his party strips off his European clothes to reveal traditional skins underneath. He is the 'authentic' Zulu who, when released from his inauthentic Europeanisation (a phenomenon that troubled missionaries, anthropologists and government officials alike in this

3 Our Wits colleague, Bheki Peterson, professor of African literature and a widely admired scholar and teacher, passed away after complications related to Covid-19 in late 2021.

4 Giliomee's argument that black people – like Afrikaners – wanted to have sovereign nations was used to justify the bantustan system under the later National Party government that was responsible for apartheid. Giliomee reprised this argument in his 2003 book.

period – that is, the early twentieth century), hastens to the Voortrekker camp to tell them of the tragedy that has befallen Retief and company.

However – and this takes us back to Shongwe's chapter in this book – if we look at Dingane *only* as the racist embodiment of white paranoia that came to be phrased by governments and white public intellectuals in the early twentieth century as the *Native Question*, replete with images of the supposed 'barbarians' at the gate, we risk missing some of the entire ideological import of *De Voortrekkers*. We are also left being unable to do anything with it other than condemn its apparently unmitigated racism and denigration of the black characters. Why carry on watching these films if they offer only a very blatant racism? Why not shred them and so make more space in the archive for something else? Bâ and Shongwe are pushing the reader to ask what can be recouped that lies beyond the surface appearance in such films.

For all its severe limitations on the representation of black people, *De Voortrekkers* also shows Dingane's warriors as strong, beautiful, disciplined and courageous – in short, the worthy enemies that have often been at the heart of portrayals of amaZulu, not only by Afrikaner nationalist writers, but also British scholars, novelists, playwrights and film scriptwriters, not to mention isiZulu-speaking authors and performers themselves.[5] In Chapter 4, Bâ urges us to think about how the putative 'assertions' of a film like *De Voortrekkers* might be 'undone'. Here, it is useful to know more than only the historical context in which the film was made, so that we do not lean, perhaps too heavily, on ideas about how it served the purpose of Afrikaner nationalist propaganda in an uncomplicated and obvious racist sense.

We need to be able to watch it frame by frame for nuances and codes encrypted by not only its screenwriter and director, as we have suggested, but also by the actors. And this is what Shongwe proposes in Chapter 6. Regarding codes encrypted by the director, we may observe that the villainy of the two troublemakers at the beginning lies in their being individualistic outsiders who come to seek out Dingane. They are like the duplicitous English capitalists whose grip on economic and political power in South Africa was fiercely resented by aspirant Afrikaans-speaking capitalists. This was also a narrative that appealed to the *lumpenproletariat* produced by the last punitive stages of the South African War and the advance of agricultural mechanisation

5 For examples of isiZulu authors, some of the works of playwright H.I.E. Dhlomo (1903–1956) and for a discussion of Dhlomo's plays about the Zulu kings see Peterson (1991); also, the poetry of B.W. Vilakazi (1906–1947). For performers, see Ken Gampu who 'fought against Burt Lancaster' in *Zulu Dawn* (1979) (Bergan 2003), and see also for a discussion of Gampu's dexterous approach to his roles in apartheid-era films, Modisane (2020).

that expelled tenants (both black and white) from the land.[6] However, in her chapter, in which her main concern is the black actors, Shongwe asks: how do we recentre black bodies in the historical frame of representation? In a radical move she elaborates on Maingard's interpretation in which black male bodies are shown simply as the subjects of subordination, and Peterson's in which they are shown as subjects that, because they are so dangerously unruly, require subordination. Shongwe seeks to deconstruct Maingard's and Peterson's hegemonic interpretations of black male bodies as problematic phenomena precisely because such interpretations are constructed and defined in terms of the logic of subordination, objects in need of social regulation. They are thus forever fixed in a racial cultural economy of domination and subjugation. It is this binary, framed and sustained by perceptual operations of the gaze with its power to fix black male bodies in specific ways that Shongwe seeks to challenge. In doing so, she extends the parameters of interpretation to articulate the complexity of black male bodies, their historical locations and operations that traverse far beyond the discourses of subordination.

The subordination of black male bodies is primarily managed through what has long been described in theoretical literature as the gaze. The gaze is directed so that viewers are able to look with impunity upon other human beings who are reduced through its operation to objects. It is, as Shongwe remarks an act of looking that comes from (and is engineered) from outside. With the help of concepts derived from several theorists, perhaps primarily Giorgio Agamben's gesture (Cowie 2015), Shongwe proceeds to conduct what she calls an 'inside out' reading of *De Voortrekkers*.

The inside out approach depends on the phenomenon that 'something above or beyond the character lingers in all depictions of humans on screen'. Obviously, the person playing the faithful servant Sobuza in *De Voortrekkers* was an actor (known as Goba) distinct from the character he was playing. Shongwe explores the latitude he might have had to communicate this fact – that he was an actor playing a part, a performer who is, by his nature, a 'curator of gestures'. By reframing *De Voortrekkers* through breaking it down into its constituent frames, one can isolate the performer's gestures. What Shongwe sees when she undertakes this exercise is an actor consistently putting distance between himself and a character whose subservience he caricatures by playing it over the top. Shongwe maintains that it is in the carefully revealed gap between performer and character read through gesture that resistance becomes visible.

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6 Here (in the context of our discussion of the ideology of *De Voortrekkers*) we are focusing on the white sharecroppers and tenants expelled from the land at the turn of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Black dispossession happened on a far greater scale.

Making sense of modernity

Tomaselli and Jansen van Vuuren's Chapter 7 is a thickly layered historical materialist approach to cultural analysis . Tomaselli is a leading film scholar in South Africa (see, for example, Tomaselli 2006; 2013) and, in part, his with Anna-Marie Jansen van Vuuren is a sort of retrospective. He reflects on how the turn to historical materialism in academia affected his own scholarship in the 1980s.

Historians in the 1970s and 1980s, analysing history from a historical materialist position, argued that the political systems of segregation and apartheid evolved from responses made by the ruling class and members of the aspirant ruling class to the perceived needs of an industrialising economy operating within the parameters of global capitalism. In short, apartheid represented not the persistence of an old-fashioned frontier paranoia, as the so-called Liberal historians continued to argue, but a response crafted over the course of most of the twentieth century to capitalism and modernity, as well as to the increasingly vociferous and often effective resistance of the oppressed. And, as has been observed, apartheid itself with its attempt to be comprehensive and efficient, making use of new technologies for classification and control, is quintessentially modern too. None of which is to say, as Zygmunt Bauman (1991) demonstrated in the case of the Holocaust, that modernity and the most appalling violations of human rights might not be entirely compatible with one another.

Tomaselli and Jansen van Vuuren's chapter compels us to look out from our own disciplinary silos – those labelled history, anthropology, literature and film studies – to observe the general currents in which intellectuals and artists of the early twentieth century associated with one another, often across racial or professional lines and affiliations.

Discourse of the New Africans

Until very recently, scholars (see, for example, Hughes 2011; Maingard 2018; Modisane 2012; Mokoena 2011; Ngcukaitobi 2018; and for exceptions in an earlier period: Couzens 1985; La Hausse 2000; Willan 1984) tended not to show black intellectuals in the first part of the twentieth century grappling with the ideas that modernity brought in its wake. Indeed, these intellectuals, often self-consciously framing themselves as 'New Africans', usually feared and welcomed such ideas in equal measure without knowing what the future would hold. What if we were to pick up on some of the perspectives offered by scholars cited above from which we may see black intellectuals as not only passive subjects of early modernity, but as actively trying to shape it, in terms of their respective class, racial, ethnic, language and other intersecting identities?

In the Tomaselli and Jansen van Vuuren chapter, we are offered vignettes of significant encounters with modernity, including those of conservative Afrikaners

who vainly attempted to repudiate it. Tomaselli and Jansen van Vuuren examine Hans Rompel's *Die Bioskoop in Diens van die Volk* (The Cinema in the Service of the Nation). What he was trying to do was to develop a blueprint for the film industry as well as for the rehabilitation of the nation, which he understood to have been smashed by both South African Wars (the first was fought in the last quarter of the nineteenth century). There is irony in the right-wing Rompel taking his inspiration from Sergei Eisenstein and the Soviet industry, but he was also inspired by the approach of the Nazis. The raison d'être of his *Reddingsdaadbond Amateur Rolprent Organisasie* (Saving amateur film organisation – RARO) was to resist modernity. In the end RARO clashed with the Broederbond (probably the single most influential instrument for the cultural and political mobilisation of Afrikaans-speakers) because it, unlike Rompel, was inclined to embrace modernity and capitalism.

Tomaselli and Jansen van Vuuren also discuss Thelma Gutsche, government and industry-employed supervisor for educational films, who was the author of the generally neglected *The History and Social Significance of Motion Pictures in South Africa* (1972). Evidently, her appraisal of the relationship between film and modernity is worth recovering. Although, as he himself records, Tomaselli had to be corrected by Ntongela Masilela regarding his (Tomaselli's) representation of Gutsche's motives, Tomaselli was the first to highlight the significance of her work in his PhD thesis in the early 1980s. (See Masilela [2000] and Balseiro and Masilela [2003] on Gutsche's approach.)

Gutsche had connections with members of the African intelligentsia, for example, through her friendship with Wits University academic and renowned isiZulu poet Benedict Bhambatha Wallet Vilakazi, and it is from these currently disparate threads that we might start to reconstruct a different kind of intellectual history. Here is a point at which we need to acknowledge the gaps in our present work. We recognise the need to give more prominence, for example, to filmmaker and actor Lionel Ngakane whose 'contribution to African cinema infrastructure was momentous' (Tomaselli and Jansen Van Vuuren), as well as to other African intellectuals of the first part of the twentieth century, often known, following their self-characterisation, as the 'New Africans'. Ngakane was a graduate of Fort Hare University College and Wits University. He worked on *Drum* and *Zonk* magazines in the late 1940s and early 1950s. In the history of African and African diasporic cinema, Ngakane's contribution, framed as it were by his exhilic experiences, is of immense historical significance.

Not only did Ngakane work in the medium of film as an actor and director, but he also tirelessly advocated for the institutional specificity of African cinema. In that regard his feature-length documentary *Vukani–Awake* (1962), about the South African liberation struggle, stands as the first film by a black South African on the subject of South Africa. Soon after *Vukani–Awake*, Ngakane directed the drama *Jemima and Johnny* (1966), which explored the conditions of

race relations in 1960s London. *Jemima and Johnny* went on to win the Golden Lion at the Venice International Film Festival, making it the first black British film to have received international acclaim. In later years he directed several documentaries, including *Mandela* for Channel 4 television, UK. His influence on *Cry, the Beloved Country* (1951) and *A Dry White Season* (1989) ought also to be granted much more recognition than is the case at present.

Furthermore, it was Ngakane's proposal for an African filmmakers' organisation, made in Tunis in 1967, that led to the creation of FEPACI – the Pan-African Federation of Film Makers – of which he became honorary president. FEPACI must be viewed as part of a larger project rooted in the political and cultural ideals of the New African Movement, predicated on a radical cultural visionary ethos for the continent.

New directions?

In Chapter 8, Dylan Valley weaves his own close observation of a South African web-series called *The Foxy Five* into snatches of his interview material with its director Jabu Newman. He also offers comparative remarks on a popular Ghanaian web-series by the name of *An African City*, which like *The Foxy Five* has five women characters. But the characters in *African City* have a lot more in common with the four fashionable New York protagonists of the TV hit series *Sex and the City* than do the women of *The Foxy Five,* who are fictionalised archetypes of Newman and her colleagues. *African City* is obviously (literally) capitalising on its resonances with *Sex and the City*, whereas *The Foxy Five* has ostensibly refused to take that kind of route to fandom. Newman claims not to be interested in moving *The Foxy Five* to television. Her reference points tend to lie in the Blaxploitation films of the 1970s.

Inspired by Cuban filmmaker Julio García Espinosa (1983), Valley raises an interesting provocation. Do progressive filmmakers have the obligation to be revolutionaries? To some extent, driven by what Newman saw in the course of the student fallist movement in which black members of the LGBTIQ+ community often took a leading role, causing her to consider the fact of their exclusion from apparently emancipatory discourses, Newman might well concur with Espinosa's arguments about the need for committed filmmakers who nonetheless would respect the independent cognitive power of art and stop trying to emulate bankrupt European forms and practices.

Newman told Valley that, having been made aware of intersectional feminism, she decided she would like to see 'what it looked like on screen'. Although, that being said, *The Foxy Five* is hyper-conscious of the need to avoid presenting the experiences of black women and, or transgender women as monolithic. Indeed, the characters come to rhetorical blows with one another.

They are shown, as Valley remarks, 'thrashing out ideas.' Attempting to mirror the ideal of the *Fallist* Movement where there were no leaders, for *The Foxy Five* there is no director and no premeditated storyline. When a character is angered by a particular representation, the story's authorship is turned over to her. Its rough edges and critical self-awareness take *Foxy Five* into the realm of Espinosa's (1983) 'imperfect cinema'. Valley notes that for Espinosa, perfect cinema was, by dint of its striving to be so, inevitably reactionary. Once cinema tailors itself to the criteria of marketability, it has no option but to capitulate to hegemonic capitalism.

Valley's chapter is invigorating for the route it suggests out of the intellectual impasse signalled later on in Chapter 12 by Reece Auguiste. Similarly, see Emelia Steenekamp's Chapter 9 for its thought-provoking appraisal of the work of Jenna Bass in contrast to the supposedly alternative Afrikaner films she also analyses. Valley's observations might also offer a way out of the restrictions imposed on African filmmakers by the high costs of sophisticated technologies and the gatekeeping of distribution networks. He does introduce some caveats around the costs, even of making material for YouTube and of its general accessibility. Still, Valley leaves us with these questions to ponder: Can a web-series like *The Foxy Five* challenge hegemonic representation and can it maintain its determination to be a project rather than a product?

Pan-Africanism?

Jihan el-Tahri in Chapter 10, insists on the recognition of the pre-Ousmane Sembène generation, explaining why, nonetheless, it is the Senegalese film director who is generally regarded as the father of African cinema. She also recalls, with reference to some vivid personal experiences, the way in which the Pan-African Film and Television Festival of Ouagadougou (FESPACO) functioned as a forum for African films that had been overlooked or excluded by European distribution networks. Not only, she explains, were such films able to find an audience at FESPACO, but it also provided a space for the intense exchange of ideas about African cinema among Africans.

Cinema's relation to the tenets of Pan-Africanism is not only confined to the issues of institutional capacity, funding and distribution. In the contemporary era, the field of curatorial practice that is fundamental to the preservation and promotion of an African historical consciousness and that cuts across artificially constructed borders, such as that which exists between North Africa (the Maghreb) and Africa south of the Sahara, constitutes the archive of African cinema.

Here the archive is deployed in its broadest terms to include, not only moving images, but also photographs, screenplays, the sonic and other texts that are

critical to the multiple histories of African cinematic cultures. We refer the reader back to Sanogo's Chapter 3 in which he proposes that notions of the archive and archival practice be uprooted from their Euro-American context. Doing so allows for a fundamental reorientation of the very idea of the archive and presents archiving as an activity that has always been foundational to Africa's historical DNA. It is a cultural activity that predates the arrival of Europeans and is a mode of knowing and doing that Africans across the continent should endeavour to preserve and vigorously pursue.

The Africanness of African cinema

A perennial trope in the discourses of African cinema scholarship is an essentialism that pertains to the Africanness of cinematic representation on the continent. It is a trope that is predicated upon the cultural influences of the oral tradition in narrativising African identity and history on the screen. In his book *Black African Cinema* (1994), Frank Ukadike not only presented the historical, cultural, economic and political forces that suffused the development of African cinema – in particular its production contexts – but also sought to ascertain the 'Africanness' of African cinema. The idea of Africanness for Ukadike hinges upon the connections between African 'oral traditions' and the structuring of narrative forms. Through this perspective, Ukadike's claim of the Africanness of Africa's cinematic productions is secured through the continent's 'pre-colonial'[7] cultural heritage – a historical moment that he viewed in terms of African cultural authenticity. Although Ukadike's contribution to the field is immense, particularly when he examines the production contexts of Lusophone, Anglophone and Francophone cinemas, this particular analysis poses a conceptual problem (see also Ukadike 2002; 2014).

The difficulty coalesces around Ukadike's notions of an authentic African culture, origin and oral traditions having the force to 'Africanise' the grammar/vernacular of African cinema. This idea that Africanness can be secured through Africanising the 'language' of African cinema suggests a propensity toward an instrumentalist and transcendental analysis of African cinema. Indeed, Ukadike uses the very phrase 'powerful instrument' with reference to African cinema in the sense that it could, if properly directed, address some of Africa's problems, particularly in the realm of visual representation (Ukadike 1994, 5). He looks to cinema to provide a voice for African people, but also describes film as 'an artistic *tool* with which to counter the hegemony of imperialism' (1994, 7. Our emphasis). In this, there is very little disagreement, as African cinema in the postcolonial era

7 'Pre-colonial' is enclosed in quote marks to draw the reader's attention to the problems attendant on this terminology, which measures the proper historical era only from the onset of the colonial.

has indeed endeavoured to do these things. However, one might ask, how does one concretely implement the tremendous task of constructing a cinema that transposes the supposed authenticity of 'pre-colonial' cultural formations into the messy and contradictory contemporary moment?

We should not lose sight of the limitations of an instrumentalist account of the process that is lacking in the kind of radical reconfiguration of epistemic assumptions that Bâ suggests in Chapter 4. A simple transposition, assuming it were practically possible, might not position African cinemas in a more radical ethos of aesthetic production. Ukadike's contribution is invaluable in that he drew attention in this field to the importance of Africa's 'pre-colonial' cultural forms, including oral histories and literatures, suggesting how they might contribute to additional complexity in narrative forms and historical representations. However, we would argue that African cinema requires more than a return to a presumed pre-existing African essence.

In contemporary Africa, the depressing statistics pertaining to the lack of support for cinema, such as film finance, production budgets, distribution networks, the decline in exhibition venues and the widespread closure of cinemas, informs El-Tahri's reflections in Chapter 10. El-Tahri's account is sobering in this regard as she ponders the difficulty for African filmmakers, starved of resources as they are, to develop an oeuvre and therefore, as she elaborates, a film language anchored in the complexity of African cultural experiences.

In the face of disheartening developments in the sphere of African cinemas, Auguiste predicts a major conceptual shift, not so much inaugurating as allowing us to appreciate the value and possibilities of new practices. We can see how this might work in terms of the account Dylan Valley has given in his chapter on the *Foxy Five* web-series. Valley shows how it is possible to use video technology and the relative cheapness and accessibility of the YouTube platform to explore ideas and representations in dynamic real time rather than to script them beforehand.

But, in moving forward to embrace new technologies and ways of making knowledge that are dependent on them, Auguiste is also determined not to lose 'sight of the monumental achievements of African cinema.' And what is it that we learn from the ouevre, or rather – since this is the way he lists them – particular works of Sembène, Djibril Diop Mambéty, Safi Faye, Souleymane Cisse, Moufida Tlatli, Abderrahmane Sissako and others?

Auguiste cautions us against thinking that we can latch on to something that would convey in simple terms the constitutive elements of African identity at a particular historical moment. He reminds us that what these films were dealing with was 'messy, contradictory and convoluted' precisely because they were active explorations of African historical consciousness. What we would have to observe and discuss would concern the multiple ways in which African identities were 'questioned, deconstructed, moulded and reconstituted'. Auguiste

recommends that we study not only films, but the documents that emerged from the deliberations of African film and media artists that were necessary declarations of intent and resolutions about what the function of African cinema should be in the project of decolonisation, and to seek to understand what the impact of cinema has been in Africa. With due deference to other art forms, Auguiste argues that cinema has an ability to reach African audiences in ways that other forms such as literary texts written in European languages cannot. He observes that sometimes cinema speaks to Africans in their mother tongue. However, he is quick not to be overly romantic about this latter feature given the huge range of languages to be found throughout Africa.[8]

But then, in a way that is characteristic of this chapter, Auguiste spins around what might sound like a limitation to point towards a productive alternative. Do not forget, he says with reference to one of Sembène's articles of faith, about the power of the image itself. Auguiste maintains that it may be desirable to challenge the conventions governing image practices. Indeed, he reserves his pessimism for an evaluation of the Hollywood machine, declaring that it has been 'strangled by its own vacuous narratives, CGI star system and bloated production budgets'. It is something that Africa has to defend itself from. It does not have to succumb to the dying appeals of the Hollywood machine.

Auguiste prompts thinking about what happens when African cinemas expand from the single channel model to cross-platform multimedia performance, video installation art, virtual reality and augmented reality. What new processes of knowledge-making are then stimulated? He gestures towards the importance of recognising, respectively, the narrative, non-narrative and symbolic strategies that have been used in African cinema over time. He asks us to engage with how African subjects on the continent and in the diaspora have tried to evade the European gaze and to resist colonial narratives. He also reminds us of the salience of race in our considerations of Africans' encounters with modernity.

Auguiste believes it is vitally important to cultivate an understanding of how the imperial gaze operated and was re-engineered in the period of decolonisation. As an example of the latter trend, he refers to the famous French ethnological filmmaker, Jean Rouch, finding himself 'bewildered' by the changed circumstances ushered in by postcolonialism. While Rouch strove to take a new direction in his filmmaking, inviting local Nigerians to assume a more significant and collaborative role, Auguiste regards him as having embodied 'the historical

8 But see Ngúgī wa Thiong'o's (1986, 16) reservations in *Decolonizing the Mind* about 'Language (as) … inseparable from ourselves as a community of human beings with a specific form and character, a specific history a specific relationship to the world' and its beauty – the imposition of English took 'us further and further from ourselves to other selves, from our world to other worlds'.

contradictions' of the transition from colonialism to postcolonialism. To this end, Auguiste quotes from an exchange that took place between Sembène and Rouch in 1965, which showed that the Senegalese filmmaker's attitude had in no way been softened by Rouch's attempts to reform his practice of turning an ethnological lens on African subjects. Without mincing his words Sembène told Rouch: 'What I hold against you and the Africanists is that you look at us as if we were insects' (Prédal 1990).

Auguiste's chapter concludes by offering examples of the work of African filmmakers/media artists who have explored multi-media platform production, including that of Akomfrah, Steve McQueen and Lorna Simpson. His final few paragraphs consider in concrete ways what the ramifications are for a transformed – or a transform*ing* – African moving-image curriculum.

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Glossary

Cynthia Kros and Reece Auguiste

Why we need specialised words

A list of concepts that appear in the book follows with what might be thought of as preliminary definitions. Most of the concepts selected have long histories, and often they are contested or used differently by the adherents of different disciplines or by people in everyday life. Thus, three or four lines do not always do justice to the concepts we present here. Nevertheless, it is a beginning and readers are encouraged to conduct their own further research.

What we are attempting to do here is to give readers a handle on the language that scholars in the fields we are addressing use to have conversations with one another, as well as to help them explore their research terrain. The words we present in the list below sometimes function like shorthand or code. They are not meant to exclude those who do not recognise them, but to convey a whole set of meanings that cannot be written out in longhand every time. We have to expect that our colleagues (and students) will understand what we mean when we say, for example 'aesthetics' without having to add explanatory notes (see Werry [2005] and McQuitty [2016]).

But some of the concepts also function in the way specialised equipment would if we were going on a demanding field expedition (see Latour [2013] for the source of this kind of analogy). Instead of taking old-fashioned compasses, barometers and paper maps, we might just take an iPhone with a GPS programme, but we would need to orientate it and ourselves, and then to follow its directions. Sometimes it might lose signal or for some unaccountable reason lead us the wrong way or we might misinterpret what it tells us and then we

would have to make readjustments. We or the GPS would need to recalculate. This is somewhat the way it is with using concepts in the scholarly field where the terrain can often be pretty tough and relentless. Sometimes the concepts are not wholly adequate for the task we have set ourselves – they give out the equivalent of a faint or even absent signal and we need to think again.

Scholars use concepts to lead them on their explorations of theory and practice. We need to know what these concepts mean, not only so that we can enter the scholarly conversation properly, but also so that we can follow the steps in the production of knowledge. We have to be in a position from which we can see how different scholars construct their arguments on the basis of their research. What concepts do they draw on? Are these concepts adequate for what they are attempting to explain or argue? How are they expanding or modifying concepts or replacing one concept with another?

The words

Aesthetics – the principles on which an understanding of beauty is based/a particular branch of philosophy that deals with questions about what may be considered to be beautiful.

Aporia – a contradiction in an argument that is impossible to solve.

Archetype – the main model of a thing or a person or a pattern of behaviour.

Archive and archival – archive usually means a collection or collections of historical records or the place where they are kept. Note all the different ways in which 'archive' and 'archival' are used in this book.

Archiveology – a mixture of 'archive' and 'archaeology' to make us think about how the archive needs to be excavated – we often need to dig deeply through many layers.

Cathartic – gaining a feeling of relief through experiencing extreme emotions.

Cognate (forms) – having a common origin or sharing something. Cognate disciplines are, for example, history, anthropology and sociology.

Commodified – turning something into a 'commodity' – making it valuable only through the price at which it can be sold

Constellation – usually a group of stars that forms a particular pattern, for example Taurus (the Bull). But often used by scholars to talk about other kinds of groups.

Contingent – unexpected/not predictable or being dependent on something else.

Diagetic – storytelling in which the story is told explicitly rather than being shown.

Dialectical – in the writings of German philosopher G.F. Hegel, dialectics refers to contradictions at the level of ideas – of people holding opposing views on a particular issue, but seeking to ascertain a fundamental truth through argumentation and reasoning. In the writings of Karl Marx, Hegel's notion of dialectics is understood as an idealist construct and was inverted to propose the theory of historical materialism (see below). Dialectical materialism is one of the main theoretical foundations of Marxism. It is based on the idea that the contradictions that exist in the thinking of human beings are caused by the contradictory relations in our society. The way we come to understand and develop our thinking about society comes not from abstract thinking, but through our efforts to change and understand the world.

Discourses/discursive – conversations in which we pay attention to their context as well as to the particular vocabulary they use. Discourses (or a discursive field) are conversations with recognisable patterns, which we can assign to a discipline, philosophy or political position.

Dispositif – a French term that comes from the work of Michel Foucault. It refers to the different kinds of mechanisms and knowledge structures that reinforce and maintain the exercise of power in a particular society. See the examples provided by Aboubakar Sanogo in his chapter.

Episteme/epistemological – 'episteme' comes from an Ancient Greek word. It can refer to knowledge, science or understanding. The philosopher Plato distinguished between three kinds of knowledge: 'doxa' meaning hearsay, common belief or opinion; 'gnosis' meaning personal experience as the basis of knowing; and 'episteme' – knowledge that has been reasoned and worked out.

Ethnography – a study of a society undertaken by a person or people who usually come from outside that society. Researchers try to understand the culture of the society they are studying from close observation and interpretation of the people's behaviour and what they say about their cultural practices.

Fetishisation – Marx used the concept of fetishisation to describe the way people thought of the relationships involved in capitalist production as being about the relationships between money and the commodities (things) exchanged in the market. This obscured the way that relationships among people function according to their roles as capitalists and workers. Marx argued that because of this blind spot people believed wrongly that things have an inherent or objective value rather than a value that is defined by the buying and selling of commodities on the market. People make 'fetishes' out of commodities (they imagine they have value that they do not really possess as a *natural* property in and of themselves).

Gaze (the gaze) – 'the gaze' is used in critical theory to mean a way of looking upon a subject that causes that subject to experience a loss of autonomy/agency.

Hegemony – dominance, often meant as social, political and/or cultural dominance by an institution, state or one social group over another.

Hermeneutically – hermeneutics is a branch of philosophy that explores questions related to the theory and methodologies of interpretation.

Historical conjuncture – a term often used by so-called structuralist Marxists. It refers to the configuration of social, political and economic forces that exist at a particular historical time that may result in a fundamental shift in social relations. For example, the transition from apartheid to post-apartheid South Africa.

Historical materialism – a methodology used by Marx and other scholars of human society. It focuses on the material conditions of societies to explain their nature and the ways in which they change rather than ideas being the determining factor. It proposes that social contradictions are produced through the concrete material conditions of human existence and that the method for apprehending, analysing and resolving contradictory phenomena is dialectical.

Ideology – a system of ideas usually applied to political or economic theories. The implication is often that ideologies are flawed and not properly backed up with epistemological reasoning.

Imaginary (the imaginary) – a concept that comes from the psychoanalytic theory of Jacques Lacan. It refers to the way that people experience reality. 'Who and what one "imagines" other persons to be, what one thereby "imagines" they mean … who and what one "imagines" oneself to be, including from the imagined perspectives of others' (*Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* 2018).

Impasse – a dead end. It does not lead anywhere.

Interpellate – a concept that was used in a particular way by the philosopher Louis Althusser. It refers to the way in which social and political institutions (like schools or governmental departments) hail (call out to and name) individuals and in that process produce the nature of the identity of those who are hailed (as learner or citizen, for example). If you answer to the way you are addressed, Althusser would have said that you are agreeing to the general ideology of your particular society and the way that it constructs scholars or citizens.

Intersectionality – comes from feminist theory. It is an analytical framework that is applied in an attempt to understand how different kinds of prejudice like racism, homophobia and misogyny intersect or work together to disadvantage and undermine the people against whom they are directed.

Knowledge silos – a phrase often used in academic contexts as a metaphor to argue against academic disciplines continuing to exist on their own as if they were kept in self-contained towers or silos. Scholars who write about 'knowledge silos' are usually arguing for interdisciplinarity.

Lexicon – can refer to the vocabulary of a person or to that of a language or of a particular field of study.

Longue durée – a phrase that comes from a group of French historians known as the Annales School. It means 'long term' and refers to explanations for historical developments that look to broad patterns or big structures. Colonialism, for example, might be used to explain some features of African societies. Colonialism would fall into the *longue durée* category.

Ludically – playfully. Scholars sometimes use 'ludically' rather than 'playfully' to suggest that we have important things to learn from play.

Materiality – to stress that we are paying attention to the material component, for example of the body. 'Materiality' alerts us to the nature of the substance with which we are dealing. It is possible to apply the concept of 'materiality' to virtual imagery.

Mediated – in the sense we are using it, it means an act of connecting something through an intermediate person or thing.

Metanarrative – a word from critical theory. A big story that is supposed to give meaning to everything. Also known as 'grand narrative'.

Mimesis – an attempt to reproduce reality.

Mise-en-scène – the way that the scenery or the visual elements are arranged on the stage of the theatre or on a film set to help tell the story.

Modalities – ways in which things exist. The word helps us to identify categories or forms or ways of doing things.

Neo-liberal –neo-liberal policies favour the so-called free market. Neo-liberal policy makers want to limit government intervention in the economy. Their argument is that if the market can function freely without the government stepping, for example, to set a minimum wage, the economy will grow and more people will reap the benefits.

Ontological – refers to the philosophical study of being. It deals with what may be said to exist, what the categories of being are and how these things are categorised or understood.

Ouevre – a French word meaning 'work'. It is often used in English, as we are using it here to denote a body of work – the *oeuvre* of a particular filmmaker, for example.

Paradigm – in scholarly discourse it means a particular way in which something has been or is generally understood or explained by a certain group of scholars or professionals at a particular time. Scholars who do not agree can

have different paradigms and over time old paradigms may be replaced by new ones. We could talk about a 'Marxist paradigm' or an 'empirical paradigm' or a 'neo-liberal paradigm'.

Pedagogic (pedagogy) – relating to the study of how teachers impart or share knowledge and the kinds of learning that take place

Phenomenology – comes from a philosophical movement founded by Edmund Husserl. It is an attempt to study the content of consciousness scientifically. Phenomenologists study everyday human behaviour so as to try to understand how objects are perceived, given meaning and remembered.

Protean – with the tendency to change often or to be versatile (able to do many things). Comes from Proteus the shepherd who was also a prophet in Greek mythology. He would change into many different shapes to avoid answering people's questions.

Reductionist – an explanation that is simplistic – does not take account of the complexity of what it is trying to explain and will reduce it to one single factor or overarching theory.

Regime of representation – refers to symbolic power that is exercised through representational practices – that persuades us to see things in a certain way (see Bourdieu 1991).

Reified – making into a thing. Comes from the work of Georg Lukács, who argues that it is a feature of capitalism, which makes people misunderstand human relations or things that have been made by people. They might interpret something as natural or as a result of God's will (in other words, something they cannot do anything about). The consequence is that people believe that society exists outside of, or in spite of, them and that they do not have any power.

Semiotic – related to the science of signs and symbols used in communication.

Signifier – refers to the form of a sign (a symbol, word, sound or image that has an underlying meaning). 'Signifier' as a concept is often associated with the work of linguist Ferdinand Saussure.

Spatial – concerns the character of space.

Subjectivities – in this sense refers to a philosophical way of thinking about consciousness and identity and how they are formed.

Synecdochal/synecdoche – a figure of speech. It means a description of a part that is used to indicate the whole. Saying you have 'new wheels' when you mean a new car or talking about businesspeople as 'suits' are examples of synecdoche.

Territoriality – how people use space to assert their ownership.

Trope – an important recurring theme or motif. You can also have a trope as in a plot convention, like the poor country boy who comes to the big city and after a few mishaps eventually makes good.

Universality – here we use this word to describe the belief that some value or idea either is already held, or should be held, by everyone in the world irrespective of the circumstances under which they live or how they identify themselves.

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Reframing Africa? Reflections on Modernity and the Moving Image

This book takes readers on a series of stimulating intellectual journeys from the late nineteenth century to the contemporary era to explore notions of modernity in the production and reception of the African moving image and of African archival practices. Ideas are presented from multiple historical and contemporary perspectives, while inviting new voices to participate in discussions about the future of the African moving image.

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Reframing Africa? will appeal to scholars, academics and practitioners across the continent and beyond.

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Cover image: A screen grab of the opening scene from *The Foxy Five* directed by Jabu Nadia Newman.

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