

**SEEING (IN) BLINDNESS:
SOUTH AFRICA, ARCHIVES AND PASSION FOR JUSTICEⁱ**

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Archives for justice I

I begin with a quote from Maurice Blanchot's book *The Writing of the Disaster*:

“You theoreticians, know that you are mortal, and that theory is already death in you. Know this, be acquainted with your companion. Perhaps it is true that ‘without theorizing, you would not take one step forward,’ but this step is one more step toward the abyss of truth ... When the domination of truth ceases – that is, when the reference to the true-false dichotomy (and to the union of the two) no longer holds sway, not even as the task of a language yet to come – then knowledge continues to seek itself and to seek to inscribe itself, but in an other space where there is no longer any direction. When knowledge is no longer a knowledge of truth, it is then that knowledge starts ...”ⁱⁱ

It is not my intention to offer you any analysis of Blanchot's words. I've read them to you as a kind of tuning exercise for myself – I am sure you will hear their echo behind everything that I say today.

Understanding of and feeling for a concept are shaped by experience.ⁱⁱⁱ In my case, both as a South African and as a practising archivist, experience has been dominated by the drama of South Africa's journey from apartheid to democracy. This drama has absorbed the complex elements of personal experience and drawn me into a conceptualisation of archives best expressed I think by the phrase ‘archives for justice’.^{iv} I am not alone in having engaged archives in South Africa within this frame – indeed, throughout my career I have always worked closely with comrades and colleagues with whom I have shared values and convictions. However, every story is different, and rather than presume to speak on behalf of others, I propose this morning to use elements of my own story to explain the ‘archives for justice’ conceptualisation.^v I apologise in advance for what may appear to be self-absorption.

Under apartheid the terrain of social memory, as with all social space, was a site of struggle. In the crudest sense this was a struggle of remembering against forgetting, of oppositional memory fighting a life-and-death struggle against a systematic forgetting engineered by the state. Interlocking legislation restricted access to and the dissemination of information on vast areas of public life. These restrictions were manipulated to secure an extraordinary degree of opacity in government, and the country's formal information systems became grossly distorted in support of official propaganda. Obsessive secrecy was further served by the selective destruction of public records and the confiscation or destruction of non-public records generated by those who resisted the system. More chilling processes of memory erasure were also utilised by the state, with many thousands of oppositional voices being eliminated through such means as informal harassment, media censorship, various forms of banning, detention without trial, imprisonment, and assassination.^{vi} A vast, simmering memory of resistance and struggle was forced into informal spaces and the deeper reaches of the underground. This was the 'context' within which I entered South Africa's State Archives Service in 1985. I entered intensely aware of this context, not as a willing functionary nor as an impartial custodian, but as a subversive. I was involved in anti-apartheid structures, and became increasingly so. My objective was to burrow into state memory resources and to feed information into the network of resistance.

This role shifted significantly after 1990. The apartheid regime was not overthrown. The revolution fought for by the liberation movements over nearly three decades did not happen. Instead, between 1990 and 1994 the apartheid government and its political allies negotiated a transition to democracy with the opponents of apartheid. In this period what I have called a transformation discourse in archives emerged,^{vii} a discourse informed by the assumption that archives required redefinition, more precisely reinvention, for a democratic South Africa. In various capacities, but principally as a member of the African National Congress's Archives Committee, I participated in the processes which shaped this reinvention. In 1995 and 1996 I was a member of the drafting team which delivered the National Archives of South Africa Act, the key legislative instrument for developing a new national archival system for the country. At the same time my work as 'subversive burrower' continued, for throughout the transition period the apartheid state remained in place and it was precisely then that the state engaged in a large-scale sanitisation of its memory resources designed to keep certain information out of the hands of a future democratic government.^{viii} Perforce, resisting the sanitisation exercises and exposing them became a major focus of my energies.

In 1995 South Africa's first democratically elected government established the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) to shine a light into the apartheid system's darkest caverns.^{ix} One of its specific mandates was "to determine what articles have been destroyed by any person in order to conceal violations of human rights or acts associated with a political objective."^x The mandate provided the basis for an investigation into the destruction of public records by the apartheid state. From the TRC's inception I carried responsibility for liaison between it and the National Archives. When the investigation into records destruction got underway, I was released to become a member of the investigative team, an involvement which endured from 1996 until the team completed its work in 1998. During 1998 I was contracted by the TRC to collate information gathered by the team and to draft sections of the final report dealing with the destruction of records.

By now, I imagine, some of you are growing weary of this autobiographical account. I remind you that I offer it as a way of explaining my own belief in the notion of 'archives for justice'. One final brief autobiographical movement before shifting to critique. Also in 1995, the new government launched a process to draft freedom of information legislation. This issued in the Promotion of Access to Information Act, passed in 2000 and brought into operation in 2001. Uniquely, it provides not only for a right of access to public records, but also for a right of access to records held by 'private bodies'. I participated in the lobbying for such legislation, and later in the drafting process. Since 2000 I have been involved in the training of public servants to implement the Act. And in my present position at the South African History Archive, I am leading a programme designed to push the parameters of public access and to build up an archive of materials released in terms of the Act. The programme is guided by a human rights imperative.

During seventeen years in the profession I have never felt able to separate professional space from my country's struggles for freedom and justice. Notions of the impartial professional, or the archivist as honest broker outside the messy clutter of politics, have found no purchase in my thinking. I have supported and lived the role of the archivist as advocate and activist for human rights. Through most of my career I had no difficulty discerning the call of justice. The lines were drawn clearly. The enemy was plain to see. I was for remembering and against forgetting; for exposure and against the secret; for seeing, against blindness; for freedom and justice, against power and oppression. And I believed, or came to believe early

on, that these values possessed a universal validity rooted, in the first instance, not in the notion that struggles for justice should take precedence over professional imperatives, but in the belief that professional imperatives are defined by the idea of struggle for justice. I believed, in other words, that ‘the archive’ itself binds archivists to be for remembering and against forgetting, for exposure and against the secret, and so on. I believed in ‘the archive’, as idea, as body of theory, transcending particular societal and other contexts, and yet always already calling archivists into struggles for justice.

For justice?

Those of you who have read my more recent writings will know that my thinking has moved into more complex conceptual realms. I now question whether the theory we call ‘archival’ has anything to say to or about justice. As Chris Hurley argued compellingly in his recent paper presented at the 2001 Association of Canadian Archivists’ Conference,^{xi} such theory is always a construct emerging out of a specific time-space configuration. ‘The archive’, in other words, never speaks to us as a thing in and of itself. It speaks to us through the specificities of particular relations of power and societal dynamics. Moreover, I no longer hold to the binary oppositions – remembering/forgetting, sight/blindness, and so on – which informed my thinking in the past. Increasingly the either/or seems overwhelmed by the both/and of our absorption into what have been called the conditions of postmodernity. In short, I have been caught by the energies of growing up. Energies which I hope are the same as those which inspired Bob Dylan to write: “I was so much older then, I’m younger than that now.”^{xii}

Let me retrace my steps to begin making the argument. Within resistances to apartheid, I said earlier, we typified our struggle as one of remembering against forgetting. The realities were a little more complex. Forgetting was an important element in the struggles against apartheid – forgetting the dimensions of struggle too painful to remember; forgetting the half-truths and the lies of the apartheid regime. We also had our secrets and our blindspots. We also allowed our imaginations to play. Memory is never a faithful reflection of ‘reality’. It is shaped, reshaped, figured and configured by the dance of imagination. So that beyond the dynamics of remembering and forgetting, a more profound characterisation of the struggles in social memory is of narrative against narrative, story against story.

After 1990 we constructed a transformation discourse in archives around a commitment to redressing inherited imbalances and rectifying the exclusions of the past. Our rallying call was “take archives to the people”. By most measures this discourse has delivered remarkably well. However, today I am intensely aware of the degree to which the discourse rests on new metanarratives, each with their own patterns of privileging and exclusion. For instance, the discourse has argued that the stranglehold enjoyed by white South Africans on the archival profession needs to be broken. Affirmative action and related programmes have made significant inroads on the stranglehold, but the profession has not begun to allow space for, less explore, the contribution offered by what have been called ‘African’ or ‘indigenous’ epistemologies. It is not enough for black South Africans to establish a representative presence in the profession. What is needed are voices employing conceptual frameworks for meaning construction that are rooted in South African societal realities and pasts. Inherited ‘Western’ ways of knowing need to be challenged. For this to happen transformation discourse must find for itself a hospitality to ‘otherness’. It must get in under an obsession with numbers and faces and engage the deeper dynamics of empowerment.^{xiii}

Between 1996 and 1998, as I have intimated, my professional work revolved around South Africa’s TRC. The TRC has been subjected to intense scrutiny by commentators from a variety of perspectives around the world. This is not the place to engage such scrutiny. Suffice it to make a single point related to my own re-evaluating. In terms of its own dominant metanarrative, the TRC’s mission was to promote reconciliation through the bringing of light to dark spaces – through the exposing of hidden pasts. It was an exercise in remembering. A quintessentially archival exercise. This was the vision which seduced me. But listen now to words from an address given by Jacques Derrida during his visit to South Africa in 1998:

“The work of the archivist is not simply a work of memory. It’s a work of mourning. And a work of mourning ... is a work of memory but also the best way just to forget the other, ... to keep it safe, in a safe – but when you put something in a safe it’s just in order to be able to forget it ... When I handwrite something on a piece of paper, I put it in my pocket or in a safe, it’s just in order to forget it ... So, suppose that one day South Africa would have accomplished a perfect, full archive of its whole history ... everyone ... would be eager to put this in such a safe that everyone could just forget it ... And perhaps ... this is the unconfessed desire of the Truth and

Reconciliation Commission. That as soon as possible the future generation may have simply forgotten it ... Having kept everything in the archive ... let us forget it to go on, to survive.”^{xiv}

By subverting the remembering/forgetting binary opposition, Derrida, I want to suggest, opens the door to a reimagination of archival endeavour and a reimagination of the TRC’s work. For there is no remembering without forgetting. There is no remembering which cannot become forgetting. Forgetting can become a deferred remembering. Forgetting can be a way of remembering. They open out of each other, light becoming darkness, darkness becoming light. And dancing between remembering and forgetting, at once spanning them and within each, is imagining. No trace in memory, not even the image transposed onto film by a camera lense, is a simple reflection of event. In the moment of its recording, the event – in its completeness, its uniqueness – is lost. The dance of imagination, moving effortlessly through both conscious and unconscious spaces, shapes what is remembered and what is forgotten. And each time the trace is revisited, the dance is busy with its work of shaping and reshaping. The archive, I would argue then, is a process. A process of remembering, forgetting and imagining. A process without beginning and without ending.

Shadowing everything I have said so far is the question of power. Let us focus on it briefly. For many years I typified my journey with archives as a resistance to power. From the years of subversive burrowing, through the era of transformation, my work with the TRC, and freedom of information activism, I fought for freedom against power. For me, power was an accretion of oppressive forces. It was the binary opposite of liberation. Now I see things differently. I begin to understand that power is not always oppressive. It can be constructive, although the boundary between the two forms is always shifting and porous. Moreover, I begin to understand that none of us can ever avoid complicity in the exercise of power. More specifically, I understand that all working with archive, all archiving, draws us into the dynamics of power relations.

Jacques Derrida has argued that “effective democratisation can always be measured by this essential criterion: the participation in and the access to the archive, its constitution, and its interpretation.”^{xv} But he also argues that “there is no political power without control of the archive, if not of memory.”^{xvi} The question then arises: can the archive dissociate itself from this ‘power to control’? Or, to phrase it differently, can democratisation ever remove the ‘archon’ (the magistrate) from the ‘arkheion’ (the place of the magistrate)? To answer the

question we must look more closely at the archive as structure and as process. In the terminology of Derrida, the archive is a conjoining of trace and substrate – writing on paper, painting on rock, virtual tracing in computer hard drives. This is what separates, ultimately, ‘memory’ from ‘archive’:

“Since the archive doesn’t consist simply in remembering, in living memory, in anamnesis; but in consigning, in inscribing a trace in some external location – there is no archive without some location, that is, some space outside. Archive is not a living memory. It’s a location – that’s why the political power of the archons is so essential in the definition of the archive.”^{xvii}

The structure of archiving, then, involves a trace being consigned to a substrate, a place (and it can be a virtual place) of consignment. And consignment, structurally, involves the exercise of power, what Derrida calls archontic power (literally, the power of the magistrate). The power to consign; the power over the place of consignment. So that in all archiving – the diarist making an entry, the rock painter at work, the person sending an e-mail to a friend – archontic power is in play. And archivists, from the beginning and always, are political players. Of course, they can strain against the forces of archontic power. They can seek to subvert it with an anarchontic power, one which troubles rather than builds memory, tends meanings rather than fixes meaning, dances with light and shadow rather than brings light. But no matter how hard they strain against the gradient of archontic power, they cannot entirely escape its pull. For the pull is a structural one for them. Even the most committed subversive in the archive is shadowed by the archontic. Equally, even the most committed archon in the archive is shadowed by the anarchontic. For the archive is divided against itself, always works against itself.^{xviii} Within the archon’s drive to remember is an instinct of forgetfulness, what Freud would label ‘death drive’. And what the archon chooses to forget or repress or suppress can come back. Within the drive to exclude is an instinct of inclusion. Which is why it is so important that archivists be held accountable, and that spaces for contestation in the archive be guarded jealously. This is, in Derrida’s words, a measure of democratisation.

The questions, of course, remain: should archivists strain against the gradient of archontic power? Should they strain against a ‘power to control’? Should they strain to deploy constructive rather than oppressive power? To all these questions I say “yes!” Not, as I did in the past, because power is always oppressive and because ‘the archive’ calls us to fight for justice. I say “yes!” because I believe that the call of and for justice - which comes from

outside of archive, outside of any ‘archival’ theory – is a calling more important than any ‘archival’ calling. Those who believe they can keep these callings separate, who believe they can separate the ‘professional’ from other spaces, who believe they can remain professionally impartial, fool themselves and condemn themselves to being the pawns of those who hold power. As Chris Hurley has pointed out graphically: “We cannot comfortably design a better system for documenting the number of heads being processed through the gas chambers as if good recordkeeping (in a technical sense) can be divorced from the uses to which it is put.”^{xix} The role of pawn, even in a democracy I would argue, is closed to the call of justice and, in the end, is profoundly reactionary.

A seeing of tears

For me, now, the call of justice is not as clear as it was. I no longer know what justice is. The lines are blurred. The ground is moving beneath my feet. Often the enemy is impossible to see. Nevertheless, I refuse to be a pawn. I refuse to give up straining to hear the faintest call of justice. If anything, my belief in ‘archives for justice’ is stronger than ever. It is precisely the not knowing, the working with the intangible, the stumbling in blindness, the reaching for the impossible, which feed my passion.

As Roland Barthes and Jacques Derrida have argued, in the dominant epistemes of ‘Western’ thinking, knowledge is still linked to sight, and ignorance to blindness, in a binary opposition.^{xx} In *Memoirs of the Blind*, Derrida asserts that “the whole history, the whole semantics of the European *idea*, in its Greek genealogy, as we know – as we see –relates seeing to knowing.”^{xxi} It is no accident that the word ‘evidence’ means, literally, to make manifest, to make see-able. Light is opposed to darkness, reason to passion. And these oppositions spawn a plethora of others. One of which is that of remembering and forgetting. What we remember we keep in the light; what we forget is consigned to darkness. In this conceptual framework the archive is a beacon of light, a place of and for sight. Its hallways ring with the cries of the initiated: “Once we were blind, but now we see! We have found the evidence, and it has enlightened us!” I have already offered you a modest deconstruction of this binary opposition. Now I’d like to turn to a brief reading of Derrida’s magisterial work of deconstruction in *Memoirs of the Blind*.

In *Memoirs* Derrida explores a range of ideas related to ways of seeing, ways of knowing. Specifically, he unfolds a way of seeing in the blindness of tears. I first read it in 1998 during a stay in Budapest for an International Council on Archives meeting. Its energies threw into stark relief the passionless proceedings of the meeting. It also connected powerfully with South Africa's then just-released TRC final report – that image of the TRC's chairperson Archbishop Tutu in tears, and the myriad TRC stories of weeping – at the same time providing a way of understanding Hungary's very different approach to dealing with its past. As always with Derrida, he probes the general in the particular, the particular in the general. So while at a certain level he is moving in epistemological space, and at another he is engaging the blindness which coheres in the very structure of the archive, at the most obvious level he is simply deconstructing the process of drawing, demonstrating that in or by drawing the drafts(wo)man does not see. For in observing the subject of the drawing, the drafts(wo)man 'sees' from memory, 'sees' from the pre-impression of various networks of presupposition.^{xxii} (S)he is pre-shaped to see certain things and not to see others. Moreover, there is always a delay – even if only for a second – between observation and the inscription of image on a substrate. In that pause memory plays. The drafts(wo)man is always confronted by the blankness, the blindness, of the substrate. Which 'reflects' his/her own blindness.

In positing a blindness in the archive, and in delineating a seeing in blindness, Derrida conjures up a different cry for the initiated: "I am blind, but I can see!" He neither dismisses reason nor abandons realities outside of human subjectivity. This blindness has no quarrel with reason. It insists only that the knowing of reason, the seeing of the eye – in light, by light, knower and known separated – be always joined to the knowing of passion, the seeing in blindness – in darkness, in the immediacy of feeling and touching. At this point I imagine frantic protesting from the archons of light: "Go on then, play your ridiculous games of blind man's buff! Follow the throbbings of your heart. Obey the voices which speak to you in the night. See where that takes you. Maybe into a mystical space all of your own, disengaged from the world around you. Or worse, into the spells of the great myth-makers, and of their footsoldiers – the creators of apartheid hit-squads, the builders of the holocaust ovens." Derrida's response to such protesting is to talk of tears, and the blindness of tears: "Deep down, deep down inside, the eye would be destined not to see but to weep."^{xxiii} It is ordinary that when we weep, it is our eyes which fill with tears. But is this not an extraordinary thought – that we weep not from any other organ, but only from the organ of sight, and that

we do so in way which blinds us? It is precisely this blindness and its seeing – the seeing of tears – which captivates Derrida.

If seeing in blindness provides an image of knowing in passion, then the seeing of tears is an image of knowing in com-passion. I care for what I know; I weep at its suffering. I weep for those parts of me struggling with alienation. I weep at the suffering of those I love, my neighbours, my community. But I care also for what I do not know, the ‘other’. I seek to be hospitable to every ‘other’, whether it be the other inside or the other outside. I weep at its suffering. For I know that in loving and tending my child I sacrifice the thousands of children around the world who have no love, no tending. I know that in buying a pair of running shoes I sacrifice the workers in a sweatshop in some godforsaken part of the world.^{xxiv} I weep for the world. For the soul of the world. All my weeping originates in this, takes me to this. I plead for suffering to end. For justice to come. For God to appear. As that great poet Allen Ginsberg has wept:

“I’m crying all the time now.

I cried all over the street when I left the Seattle Wobbly Hall.

I cried listening to Bach.

I cried looking at the happy flowers in my backyard, I cried at the sadness
of the middle-aged trees.

Happiness exists I feel it.

I cried for my soul, I cried for the world’s soul.

The world has a beautiful soul.

God appearing to be seen and cried over ...^{»xxv}

This crying for God to appear, this knowing in the blindness of tears, at once has nothing to do with archives and everything to do with archives. Nothing to do with archives in the sense that its originary movement is before and beyond ‘archive’. Everything to do with archives, for the archive’s dance of remembering, forgetting and imagining ultimately can only be danced in this blindness. I am suggesting that it is only this blind dancing which can unravel the archontic strappings designed to bind archives and archivists into the work of subjugation.

Archives for justice II

Let me conclude now on a more practical note. What does all this mean for the practice of archives? What are the practical implications of a belief in archives for a justice which is not knowable, a justice which is always coming? Or, to use a handier label, what would be the contours of a deconstructive practice of archives?

Deconstruction, I would argue, inspires a radically activist practice of archives. It has little space for calm, cool, so-called impartial heads. It brings fever and yearning and determination to bring justice. The archive, for deconstruction, is not a quiet retreat for professionals and scholars and craftspersons. It is a crucible of human experience. A battleground for meaning and significance. A babel of stories. A place and a space of complex and ever-shifting power-plays. Here you cannot keep your hands clean. Here the very notions of profession and scholarship and craft must be reimagined.

Unlike activists who know ‘the truth’, who know what justice is, activists of deconstruction are without certainty or clear-cut destination. They move outside of binary oppositions. They see no hard boundaries between concepts and conceptual realms. They cannot separate out the personal, the professional, the epistemological, and so on. They bring all of this fabric-ing to bear on their ‘archival’ work. They are eccentric (ex-centric), moving through the breaches in every circle of knowledge. They understand that the language they use, the very words that are available to them, are instruments of power. They know that every move they make is a construction of knowledge, an exercise of power. They feel compelled to disclose their complicity in these constructions and exercises. Of crucial importance, they are bound by the principle of hospitality to ‘otherness’. They respect every ‘other’, invite every ‘other’ in. So that whether they are making records available, or describing records, or appraising recordkeeping systems, they listen intently for the voices of those who are marginalised or excluded by prevailing relations of power. An impossible challenge of course. How to invite in what is always beyond the limits of understanding? How to avoid the danger of speaking *for* these other voices? How to avoid reinforcing marginalisation by naming ‘the marginalised’? How to invite in what one wishes to resist – the voices, for instance, of white supremacists, or of hard drug dealers, paedophiles, rapists, pimps, and so on, and on and on? In the memorable words of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak: “Let us, then, for the moment at least, arrest the understandable need to fix and diagnose the identity of the most deserving

marginal. Let us also suspend the mood of self-congratulation as saviors of marginality.”^{xxvi}
 The activists of deconstruction are not romanticisers of ‘otherness’. They fear it even as they respect it. They know that as much as it is ‘outside’, it is also ‘inside’. Finally, they know only that justice calls them to engage it, without blueprint, without solution, without answers.

Does all this dissipate their energy, pull them down into inertia? No, for they believe in the impossible. They believe in a justice that will come because people believe in its coming. They believe in a power which can transcend oppression, in a becoming which can transcend language and constructedness and marginalisation. They believe that the archive matters, even to the gods. They have faith.

Endnotes

ⁱ This paper unashamedly draws heavily on work previously published by me. In many ways it constitutes a revisiting of this work, more precisely a refiguring and a reorienting. I acknowledge with gratitude those who offered me critical readings of early drafts – Wendy Duff (University of Toronto), Kerry Harris (my partner, no further appellation necessary), Chris Hurley (National Archives of New Zealand), Ethel Kriger (National Archives of South Africa) and John Roberts (National Archives of New Zealand). Their observations undoubtedly enriched the text, and although I accept full responsibility for the ‘final product’, all of them with the exception of Chris, who stands some distance from me epistemologically, must accept complicity in what remains a dangerous argument.

ⁱⁱ Maurice Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster* (University of Nebraska Press, 1995), p.43.

ⁱⁱⁱ Experience, of course, is never unmediated. Discourse, ideas, language all shape how living is turned into experience.

^{iv} For a more fulsome account of my experience of this nexus, see “Archons and Concrete: A Reminiscence of Being in the State Archives Service during the 1980s”, *Archives News* 42,1 (1999).

^v I know of only one other who has written about this particular nexus of the personal and the societal. See Julie Frederikse, “We Look Back to Move Forward: Making Oral History popular and Accessible”, *Innovation* 14 (1997).

^{vi} For more detailed accounts of this scenario, see Verne Harris and Christopher Merrett, “Towards a Culture of Transparency: Public Rights of Access to official Records in South Africa”, *The American Archivist* 57,4 (1994); Verne Harris, “Redefining Archives in South Africa: Public Archives and Society in Transition, 1990-1996”, *Archivaria* 42 (1996); and Verne Harris, “The Archival Sliver: A Perspective on the Construction of Social Memory in Archives and the Transition from Apartheid to Democracy”, forthcoming in the book *Refiguring the Archive*.

^{vii} For detailed accounts of this discourse, see Verne Harris, “Redefining Archives in South Africa”, and Verne Harris, “Claiming Less, Delivering More: A Critique of Positivist Formulations on Archives in South Africa”, *Archivaria* 44 (1997).

^{viii} For a detailed account of these sanitisation exercises, see Verne Harris, “‘They Should Have Destroyed More’: The Destruction of Public Records by the South African State in the Final Years of Apartheid”, *Transformation* 42 (2000).

^{ix} The seventeen-member Truth and Reconciliation Commission was given four principal functions: to establish as complete a picture as possible of the causes, nature and extent of gross human rights violations committed in South Africa between 1960 and 1994; to facilitate the granting of amnesty to perpetrators of gross human rights

violations associated with a political objective; to recommend appropriate reparation for the victims of gross human rights violations; and to compile a report of its activities, findings and recommendations. The Commission's final report was submitted to President Mandela in October 1998. However, the work of the Commission's Amnesty Committee continued into 2001. A codicil to the final report is expected to be submitted to the president before the end of 2001.

^x Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act (Number 34 of 1995), section 4(d).

^{xi} Chris Hurley, "The Evolving Role of Government Archives in Democratic Societies", presented at the Conference *The Archival Odyssey*, Winnipeg, 9 June 2001. To quote from the paper (a copy of which Chris Hurley kindly gave me after the Conference): "Like everybody else, recordkeepers are ultimately bound to the society in which they live (the context in which they operate)... Our professional standards are no longer value-free once they are applied into one society or another – once they are given a context. In application, they acquire a colour of the society in which they operate. It is because we live in a democracy, therefore, not because we are archivists, that our professional standards and practices support democratic values."

^{xii} From "My Back Pages", in *Another Side of Bob Dylan*, 1964.

^{xiii} For an exploration of what this might entail, see Verne Harris and Sello Hatang, "Archives, Identity and Place: A Dialogue on What it (Might) Mean(s) to be an African Archivist", *ESARBICA Journal* 19 (2000).

^{xiv} Transcript of Derrida seminar on *Archive Fever*, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, August 1998, to be published in forthcoming book *Refiguring the Archive*.

^{xv} Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* (University of Chicago Press, 1996), p.4.

^{xvi} *Ibid.*

^{xvii} Transcript of Derrida seminar.

^{xviii} This is the fundamental insight of *Archive Fever*.

^{xix} Chris Hurley, "The Evolving Role of Government Archives".

^{xx} Christopher Norris and Andrew Benjamin, *What is Deconstruction?* (London and New York, Academy Editions and St. Martin's Press, 1988), p.53.

^{xxi} Jacques Derrida, *Memoirs of the Blind: The Self-Portrait and Other Ruins* (University of Chicago Press, 1993), p.12.

^{xxii} The pre-impression of what Derrida calls 'archi-text'. John Caputo describes 'archi-text' as "various networks – social, historical, linguistic, political, sexual networks (the list goes on nowadays to include electronic networks, worldwide webs) – various horizons or presuppositions..." Caputo, *Deconstruction in a Nutshell: A Conversation with Jacques Derrida* (Fordham University press, 1997), pp.79-80.

^{xxiii} Derrida, *Memoirs of the Blind*, p.126.

^{xxiv} In sacrifice there is a double blindness. The blindness which enables sacrifice (see pp.98-100 of *Memoirs of the Blind*), and the blindness (of tears) which accompanies comprehension of sacrifice. For an exhaustive account of sacrifice, see Derrida's *The Gift of Death* (University of Chicago Press, 1995).

^{xxv} Allen Ginsberg, *Collected Poems 1947-1980* (Harper and Row, New York, 1984), p.151.

^{xxvi} Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Outside in the Teaching Machine* (Routledge, New York and London, 1993), p.61.