

Chapter 5

Opening Spaces through Exhibiting Absences: Representing Secretive Pasts

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Many chapters of *Chemical Bodies* illustrate how the history of the use of chemical agents as methods of control and coercion has been intimately tied to the rendering of harm as (in)visible. While suffering has been foregrounded to make the case for brutality and exceptionality on some occasions, on other occasions, suffering has been downplayed, denied or backgrounded to make the case for benevolence and normality. This suggests the need for caution about what is and is not included in any accounts of chemical agents.

Another source for caution is the way the development and use of chemical agents is often undertaken in conditions of secrecy. As a result, scholars, journalists, activists and others investigating such capabilities often take their task as one of exposing hidden truths or unappreciated events. The promise of revealing or unmasking offers a fetching allure for investigators and audiences alike: an invitation to become complicit in a shared but still exclusive understanding.

Against the aforementioned points, this chapter takes the chemical and biological warfare (CBW) programme established under Apartheid South Africa (code named 'Project Coast') as a topic for attending to our commitments in representing the past. This secret military programme used an elaborate array of front companies to camouflage its activities to those both outside and inside of it. Through the endeavours of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and other investigations, Project Coast has come to symbolize the perversities of Apartheid. And yet, each attempt to determine what took place has been delimited by the very terms of the investigations setup to establish the truth. Thus, any attempt to present this programme needs to find ways of acknowledging the partiality of what accounts can be fashioned.¹

As part of the transition away from Apartheid, over the last two decades, South Africa has figured as a prominent, if not exemplar, case of how regard for the past might encourage reconciliation. By the time of the writing of this chapter, however, the fraught experiences with transitional justice in this nation suggest that pinning down more details about yesterday or providing social meta-narratives through a time-bound truth commission are not sufficient to ensure a just tomorrow. Nor may they satisfy a new generation.

Minding such considerations, our chapter asks: What kind of histories should be told of Project Coast today?

We consider this question in relation to two material forms of storytelling undertaken by the authors: a monograph titled *Dis-eases of Secrecy: Tracing History, Memory and Justice* and an exhibition titled *Poisoned Past: Legacies of South Africa's Chemical and Biowarfare Program*.²

In this chapter, we consider how these stories of the past sought engagement with what remains outside of them. We seek to move beyond simply orientating to the restrictions on what can be told as information barriers that lead to 'knowledge gaps' resulting in more or less flawed histories. Taking our inspiration from (i) work in geography which understands space not as some fixed terrain but instead as an entanglement constructed from acts of connection and separation,³ (ii) the 'spectral turn' in the humanities and (iii) 'difficult heritage' practices more specifically, we ask how notions of presence and absence can be intertwined to offer novel possibilities for representing secretive pasts. Our engagement with the relation between presence and absences in these mediums is offered to promote consideration of the purposes of histories, the techniques of rendering bodies (in)visible, the demands of investigating the past and the commitments of unearthing.

CONCEALMENT AND DISCLOSURE

Since its official closure in 1995, Project Coast has been the subject of a number of inquiries and publications.⁴ Notably the TRC examined it through public hearing in the late 1990s. The TRC hearing was the first large-scale public exposure of a national chemical and biological weapons programme.⁵ Also, between October 1999 and April 2002, Dr Wouter Basson faced sixty-seven fraud, murder and drug charges directly or indirectly related to his activities as the long-time head of Project Coast. This was one of the longest trials in South Africa's history. Basson was not found guilty in relation to any of the charges. This trial was the subject of a book titled *Secrets and Lies* co-written by Chandré Gould. In addition, in 2002, Gould co-authored a 300-page report for the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research and Centre for Conflict Resolution titled *Project Coast: Apartheid's Chemical and Biological Warfare Program*.⁶ In

2013, the Health Professionals Council of South Africa (HPCSA) concluded a fraught and lengthy disciplinary hearing and found Basson guilty of unethical conduct for activities while he was head of Project Coast. As of late 2017, a sentence had yet to be passed. Basson is the only person associated with the programme to have been legally charged or professionally sanctioned. Through these investigations and others, much has been publicly disclosed about Project Coast. And yet, with this disclosure, it has also become plain that much is not understood, and may never be so.

In this section, we indicate some of the ways in which concealment and disclosure have characterized *both* the activities in the programme and the investigations into it to determine what took place.

To begin, concealment was a sought capability within the activities of Project Coast; particularly the development of undetectable ways of chemically killing and injuring. Among the weapons that did not look like weapons included spring-loaded screwdrivers, bicycle pumps and umbrellas that released chemicals of choice. Finger rings with hidden poison compartments were manufactured. In combining the right-looking ‘applicators’ with the desired acting substances, many variations were possible: chocolates with botulinum toxin, anthrax-contaminated envelope glue and so on.

When understood as assassination weapons, such applicators disguised purpose in appearance. Upon accusatorial questioning and TRC hearings in 1998, however, individuals such as Wouter Basson repeatedly defended their production, suggesting the devices’ real purpose was not what it seemed. What conceivable reason could there be in putting cyanide in peppermint chocolate then if not to poison? To demonstrate to members of South African security forces what Russian trained African National Congress (ANC) operatives could do with simple chemical substances, Basson retorted. Why lace cigarettes with anthrax? To test if this delivery system could harm people (tests showed it could not). Why produce bottles with cholera? To test inoculation processes and advise about how to deal with potential outbreaks in Namibia.⁷

Investigations into this programme were also characterized by a dynamic interrelation between disclosure and concealment. Particularly in the initial years after Apartheid, technical, scientific and operational documentation associated with Project Coast was scarce. Records of this closely guarded and officially secret programme were not available to the public or even some official investigators during Apartheid and in the immediate years thereafter. Even those who may have had a right to know – such as TRC investigators – were effectively barred from military archives, not least through the requirement that they had to make specific requests for particular documents despite not having any knowledge of what records were kept or how the South African Defence Force (SADF) archival system operated.

Instead of deriving from a general opening up of the security state, the large majority of the documents that proved central to later investigations came indirectly and serendipitously. To detail one chief set of eventualities, on 29 January 1997, South African Narcotics Bureau detectives set up a sting operation in a parking lot near the home of Dr Basson. He turned over a black plastic bag with 1,040 capsules of the street drug Ecstasy to a business acquaintance who then placed 60,000 rand on Basson's car seat. The operation eventually led the police to the home of an associate of Basson. There, two blue sealed steel trunks were located and subsequently two others were discovered. They contained more drugs, as well as hundreds of sensitive and classified documents that would become central to constructing accounts of what took place.⁸

Furthermore, while eleven witnesses associated with the programme testified in the TRC public hearing, three senior figures did so reluctantly. TRC panel members sought to question witnesses about complicated financial, managerial and technical matters but with only the limited documentary evidence in their possession. For their part, witnesses often struggled with remembering events of years past but also making sense of documents and activities they reported not knowing about.

Likewise, the criminal case against Basson was plagued by difficulties about the limitations of evidence.⁹ For many murders or chemical interrogations in which Basson was alleged to have played an active role, the only witnesses present were those that had carried them out. As such, their testimony before the court was open to question about their motivation. In general, these witnesses were regarded as flawed by the trial judge. Many of those associated with the SADF could not have been called by the prosecution because they would have been hostile, more likely to harm than help the state's case. Moreover, Basson's trial was not set up to hear – let alone resolve – disputes about activities raised in previous investigations but that were not connected to the specific fraud, murder or drug charges. As a result, activities such as the authorization and development of anti-fertility vaccine to be used against black women discussed at the TRC were not examined at the trial, nor in the HPCSA professional hearing. Indeed, the HPCSA pursued charges based only on what Basson himself had admitted and testified to in the trial, such as the production of drugs and tear gas, in an attempt to prevent lengthy legal contestation.

Reluctance to air evidence openly was not just evident by those individuals and organizations cast as wrongdoers. At the TRC, and subsequently, officials in the South African ANC-led government would warn about the dangers of publicly detailing Project Coast. Why would the post-Apartheid government not want to publicly reveal details of a chemical and biological weapons programme that targeted its own members? Besides the proliferation dangers

of airing information, it is likely that the newly elected ANC government would have feared that something 'unknown', and potentially embarrassing or harmful, would be revealed. Particularly in the early years after Apartheid, the information the new state had about the programme was only that which they had been given by Basson and others associated with Project Coast. The extent to which that picture was complete could only be guessed at by ANC government officials. In other words, what 'the state' itself was 'allowed' to know was limited to what it was officially told. As such, the fledging ANC government needed to protect the secret that it did *not* know.

The investments made into believing that highly dangerous secrets existed and that they needed extraordinary protection measures was evident in relation to the notional method for retaining technical documentation. As part of the winding down phase, the management committee for Project Coast decided certain documentation should be saved electronically on CD-ROM discs while the physical versions would be destroyed. Especially given the sealed steel trunks found in 1997 at the home of an associate of Basson, what had happened to the electronic versions of Project Coast documentation took on some importance subsequently. Surgeon General Niel Knobel (head of Coast's Management Committee) spoke in detail about the elaborate provisions made to keep this information secure at the 1998 hearings:

After the technical information was transferred from documents onto the discs, the discs were brought to me by Colonel Ben Steyn [the last Project Officer of Project Coast] in a safe. I established that the discs were inside the safe, and as far as I remember there's also an additional floppy along with it, which is the access mechanism, access coding that you require to be able to access the information on the discs.

It was then put into a very large wall safe attached to my office and my headquarters and only Colonel Steyn and I had control, joint control over the small safe, smaller safe, the portable safe. After the demarche and particularly after the Americans and the British expressed concern about the safety of the information on the discs, I went to see [South African President] de Klerk and I followed it up with a letter and that letter I can give you a copy of. It was in April 1994.

At that stage we changed the joint control in such a way that all three of us, the President, Mr de Klerk, Colonel Steyn and myself had to be present in order to access or to be able to open the small safe. The position was then changed, it was then changed to a safe in a different part of my headquarters, a huge safe with two keys and a combination and the small safe with its two keys was put into the bigger safe.

And in that joint control we gave the President one of the keys of the big safe as well as the combination of the big safe. I kept the key of the big safe and one of the keys of the small safe. Colonel Steyn had the combination of the big safe and the other key of the small safe, and that was how that situation was maintained.¹⁰

As subsequently recounted by Surgeon General Knobel, when the new government came to power in 1994, the key and combination given to President de Klerk was passed over to Deputy President Thabo Mbeki. Yet what was actually on the discs, and why it was retained was not clear, even to those who held the keys.

In openly discussing the existence and whereabouts of the discs, the media and the TRC posited that there was something on the discs that needed to be hidden because of its profound importance.¹¹ As Burger and Gould noted in *Secrets and Lies*, the 2002 book about Basson's criminal trial, a later review undertaken of the 'CD-ROMs stored as a "national asset" under the most stringent security concluded that, far from being the repository of Coast's deepest, darkest secrets, the discs contained little more than published literature on [chemical and biological warfare] in general'.¹² While the existence of the discs was discussed during the TRC hearing, and in *Secrets and Lies*, the power of the push to retain secrets was made evident in a 2013 interview between two of the authors (Gould and Rappert) and a senior member of the military. He did not wish even to mention the existence of the discs on record because he felt they were still too sensitive.¹³

In a similar vein, the light cast by investigations might well be judged as not always illuminating. Because the Basson trial was an undertaking to consider criminal charges against him as the only accused, possible wrongdoing by others in Project Coast was sidelined. As head of the programme for most of the secret military programme's existence, this is unsurprising at one level. However, the focus on the individual, and thus the personification of the programme both during and subsequent to the trial, arguably has served to distract attention away from the many others who held leadership positions in the military, or even in the companies that made up Project Coast, and those who performed the more mundane tasks that allowed the programme to function. To this day, the focus on Basson alone allows, even encourages, a perception that the criminal trial and the HPCSA's hearing were 'witch hunts' that unfairly targeted the most visible, most exposed person.¹⁴

A SENSE FOR ABSENCE

The previous section gave a flavour of the ways in which what has and can be said about Project Coast implicates a sense of what remains unsaid. Such considerations undercut the belief that some definite and definitive account can be given. We propose that one sensibility that follows from the analysis earlier is that rather than being sharply divided, disclosure and concealment should be understood as subtly interrelated.

The need to recognize this is evident in how histories to date have been positioned. For instance, in 2002, some commenters drew the lesson in

the report *Project Coast: Apartheid's Chemical and Biological Warfare Program* that 'having come clean on its experience during the Apartheid years lends real credibility to South Africa's ethical and practical stance on international disarmament. South Africa went to the edge and beyond and then – under a new, enlightened regime – came back. Others can do the same'.¹⁵ Whether such optimistic appraisals can be justified today is open to doubt.

Or, at least, that is the way the authors of this chapter would regard the situation. The sensitivities surrounding what histories can and have been told, in turn, signal the importance of minding wider cautions about what can be expected from history. Having undertaken significant efforts to detail the Apartheid past, we would regard the aspiration to 'set the record straight' as problematic. These are some of the reasons why:

(1) Experience to date with Project Coast has indicated the ways in which disclosures provide the very basis for yet further questioning. One example would be the revelation by a former SADF soldier, Johan Theron, during the Basson trial that hundreds of sedated South West African People's Organization (SWAPO) prisoners of war had been thrown from an aircraft into the sea off the Skeleton Coast. To date, all attempts to verify this information, or seek further information that could reveal the identity of those killed, in this way have failed, including attempts to engage the assistance of the Namibian authorities. This raises questions about the veracity of Theron's claims, and about the reluctance of the Namibians to resolve the mystery.¹⁶

(2) Despite the often held belief that revelation leads to lessons that can work to prevent future abuses, this is not necessarily the case. A 2015 study by the Academy of Sciences of South Africa found that 'education and/or training on research ethics, including issues such as scientific misconduct . . . is not routine for life scientists' and 'there was a low level of awareness among life scientists about national and international conventions, laws and regulations related to their research; and that information about these instruments is not readily available'.¹⁷ This was so despite many years of work, after the TRC hearing, to raise awareness about chemical and biological weapon programmes among scientists, academics and professional associations and draw lessons about the importance of ensuring that the training of scientists includes reference to the international norms (as enshrined in the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) and the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC)) as well as national legislation.

(3) In South Africa, in particular, the bargain of truth in exchange for amnesty from prosecution within the TRC did not work quite as well as hoped. As discussed in Lentzos's *Biological Threats in the 21st Century*, 'there was little or no motivation for amnesty to be sought in cases where the perpetrators were fairly certain their deeds would remain hidden, such as information about the details of military involvement in human rights violations. Indeed, the military closed ranks, effectively boycotting the TRC process, with only a handful of amnesty applications being received from soldiers'.¹⁸ This suggests a need to rethink investments placed in 'truth'.

(4) Also, as became clear in recent dialogues hosted by the Nelson Mandela Foundation with memory workers from around the world, formal transitional justice processes and efforts at ‘truth telling’ do not necessarily lead to healing as may have been presumed.¹⁹ Indeed, the way in which such processes reinforce a binary between ‘victim’ and ‘perpetrator’ may well create the conditions for the reoccurrence of violations by ‘righteous victims’.²⁰

(5) Processes of revelation based on investigation necessarily excluded much of the information that is gathered. Not only is it simply not possible, or in some instances unethical, to include all information gathered during an investigation; it also is necessary to create narratives that are understandable and useful to intended audiences. As such, investigators have to exercise discretion and caution in deciding what is put into the public domain, at least if the intention is to minimize further harm.

(6) Finally, one of the difficulties of investigating Project Coast relates to the overabundance and familiarity of stories and evidence. Such a situation of surfeit presents its own potential to render some matters obscure. The question then for representing Project Coast now is ‘How can we effectively open space for something new?’.

As a result of these considerations, what remains unknown is not simply this or that remaining piece of the puzzle, the placement of which can complete the picture of the past if only we could unearth it. Instead, varying suggestions about what still needs to be established and who possesses such information helps constitute radically alternative understandings of the outline, morals and lessons to be derived from the past.

Rather than seeking to pry open the secrets hidden away, our experiences to date with the production and reception of accounts of Project Coast suggest adopting a sense of alertness to the expectations from history. To put it in other terms, what is called for is more aligned with inquiry rather than resolution, receptiveness to possibilities rather than detailing particulars. In the remainder of this chapter, we elaborate ways sought to realize such an orientation. We consider possibilities for negotiating presence-absence in relation to two different types of interventions: a co-authored book *Dis-eases of Secrecy* by Rappert and Gould as well as an exhibition curated by all the authors titled *Poisoned Pasts*. These were not efforts to ‘set the record straight’ about Project Coast, but instead efforts to attend to the manner in which histories are made and remade by using connections and separations to create alternative spaces.

DIS-EASES OF SECRECY: SEWN THREADS

A basic intent of the 2017 book *Dis-eases of Secrecy: Tracing History, Memory and Justice* was to cultivate an awareness of the conditions for knowing; this by writing in a format whereby we as authors sought to develop a sense of

the fractured and fraught process of assembling a history of secreted events – secreted in the both senses of the term: released and concealed.²¹

This was done through an explicit two-part organization. The entire main text is broken up into 548 numbered entries that are given in roughly chronological order. Each entry provides its own fragment account of the past. The entries can be read from front to back in the conventional fashion, though with some effort. In addition, the entries are organized into eleven themes. Entries one to eleven in *Dis-eases of Secrecy* provide the first entry for each of the eleven themes. At the end of these starting entries, readers then are given the number of another entry that continues that theme. They carry on reading until directed to another numbered entry, and so on moving back and forth in the book between different time periods. As the reader progresses through the text, they find themselves circling back on entries they have encountered before but situated in a different sequential context. The circularity of the thematic organization itself points to the lack of resolution or a clear end. The intent was to mirror the process of inquiry and investigation into troubled pasts. In other words, the flipping back and forth between pages to read the entries is a physical embodiment of how the assembling of histories takes place, with connections being made between some events and not others.

The intellectual inspiration for this organization was Sven Lindqvist's *A History of Bombing*. This entry-to-entry technique enabled Lindqvist to produce an absorbing, detailed, yet accessible overview of the fantasies, expectations, terrors, fascinations and duplicities of aerial bombing. Through the thread-based entry into the 'labyrinth' of past, he encouraged readers to sense that they are only taking 'one of many possible paths through the chaos of history'.²²

We too were interested in opening options that enable a tracing of the past. Our orientation in relation to the entangled past of Project Coast differed somewhat from *A History of Bombing* in that we were often not sure about how to characterize what took place – whether that be a labyrinth, scheme, network, circus or cycle. Our themes were not single-track lines for getting through a complex labyrinth. Instead, by offering discourses that intersect, branch off, get read in reverse order and so on, we sought to stimulate imagination for ways of diagnosing situations anew. We also sought to place the reader amid the sometimes contradictory and confusing interpretations from multiple sources to enable them to experience the choices associated with writing about contested events. For instance, an entry positioned as part of the sequence of one theme can take on a rather different meaning when positioned elsewhere.

The goal, in short, was to turn a technique for reading into a method for inquiry. We wrote with absences and secrecy to alert readers to the processes of producing knowledge of the past. Through an argument in which what was

missing was intended to be as much a feature of what was given, we sought to encourage readers to partake in a process of investigation – with the lures, dissatisfactions and affects that this can entail. It is between the traces and fragmentations of our accounts that we hoped readers would be able to ask questions of themselves and others about the purposes of history and the potential of memory. In doing so, we hoped to engender sensitivities with the investments in the telling of history.²³

POISONED PASTS: MATERIAL LACUNAE

In 2015, the authors partnered with the Nelson Mandela Foundation in the development of an exhibition titled *Poisoned Pasts* that took as its central theme the Apartheid-era chemical and biological warfare programme. It initially ran at the Nelson Mandela Foundation Centre of Memory between October 2016 and July 2017 and at the time of writing was housed at the Steve Biko Centre (Ginsberg Township, Eastern Cape).

Poisoned Pasts sought to stimulate questions and discussion about the responsibilities of scientists to prevent the malign application of science, to consider how easily scientists might be drawn to similar work in the future and to question the closure promised by justice and transitional justice related to South Africa. The exhibition was offered as a response to the frustrations of transitional justice to deliver accountability and sanction of those involved in human rights abuses, with a particular goal to engage (younger) audiences in questions about the relevance of the past to the present.

As in the case of *Dis-eases of Secrecy*, as the curators of *Poisoned Pasts*, we sought to do this in part by using the interplay between what was displayed and what was not (or could not be). As a physical space, an exhibition can make use of a far greater range of modalities of expression than a written manuscript. Extending the idea of turning a technique for reading into a method for inquiry, we sought to design an exhibition that would encourage visitors to assume an active investigative role. While this intention was conveyed in the written exhibition guide (a text that may or may not have been read by exhibition goers), it was achieved through the design choices made.

In the remainder of this chapter, we attend to how we attempted to realize our intentions and motivations, first in relation to the question of materiality, covering both artefacts and the construction of exhibition elements, and then in relation to how the spatial design of *Poisoned Pasts* extended these decisions, allowing the play of presence and absence to find both explicit and implicit expression. This leads finally to a consideration of the representation

of those affected by Project Coast, and how these visual solutions reflect our desire to acknowledge both those potentially lost to the project and the challenges of accounting for unresolved deaths and disappearances.

Material Objects: Three Registers

The primary (but by no means exclusive) mode of engagement within exhibitions is an aesthetic one. The *raison d'être* of exhibitions presupposes visual content, including objects that demonstrate and authenticate the events being described. In this respect, designing *Poisoned Past*s presented a particular challenge. Whether due to wilful destruction, standard procedures, or shoddy bureaucratic management, very few material artefacts survive that can be taken as 'proof' of Project Coast's existence or activities. Only one 'true' artefact of the programme could be located and made available for inclusion in the exhibition: a collection of modified screwdrivers and other fragments from covert devices that were entered into evidence at Basson's criminal trial. What also remains of the project are several thousand pages of archival documents, mainly facsimiles. With this documentation, we are still left with the issue of authenticity, but the more pressing concern is how to render these many pages of (partial, redacted, questionable) data accessible, useful and productive, especially as our primary intention in designing the exhibition was to position visitors as active investigators that could open up new possibilities for received histories.

One way we dealt with this poverty of objects was to fashion proxy objects. These included a 1:1 scale reproduction of a personal safe in which CD-ROMs containing the records of Coast were allegedly stored by Surgeon General Niel Knobel (see above), as well as a custom-designed restraint chair for animal experimentation (probably baboons), used by the project at Roodeplaat Research Laboratories. The chair was reconstructed after an original design by biomedical engineer Jan Lourens; its form and functions were detailed during Lourens's TRC testimony and later interviews with Gould and the exhibition design team. Constructed in thick Perspex, the original unit (current location unknown) consisted of a chair with straps to restrain an experimental animal in a transparent housing that would allow scientists to visually observe the effects of various gases on the animals. For *Poisoned Past*s, both the safe and the chair were rendered in corrugated cardboard – functionless and impotent. Other proxies included an array of everyday groceries and toiletries that Project Coast scientists sought to modify with various poisons.

We regarded the deployment of proxies as enabling but also tension-ridden. Displaying objects of violence may well invite criticism that the exhibition makers are, wittingly or unwittingly, participating in the extension of trauma through choreographing violence-as-spectacle. Artefacts of real or intended

crimes gain an undeniable ‘thing power’ (to use Jane Bennett’s phrase²⁴) that in turn invests them with a potency – their lure is hard to resist (the record-breaking attendance at the Museum of London’s 2016 exhibition ‘Crime Museum Uncovered’ bears this out). Too, we cannot avoid another kind of fetishization that comes with an indexical object, the bearer of a forensic ‘I was there’ performance of authenticity. The benefits of exhibiting such objects should be tested against following questions : What might be gained from doing so? Could exhibiting the objects be harmful? To whom?

Besides the aforementioned strategies, the fictions and absences of Project Coast were communicated by engaging with different modalities of visual representation, from the photographic to the illustrative. For example, *Poisoned Pasts*’s visual language was graphically bold, making extensive use of South Africa’s rich legacy of photojournalism. Acid yellow, deep red and ultraviolet blues dominate the colour palette, along with visual filters such as the half-tone screen (the dot-matrix of traditional reproduction technology) and negative inversion created textures from photographic images. These were used as visual cues as they have become inscribed in Western visual culture as semiotic shorthand for mass-media appropriation while also signifying a deconstructionist position in relation to it. Such deliberate (re)mediations make implicit and explicit statements about the limits and constructions of archival practices, and in turn, how the exhibition confronted the challenge of truth-telling and truth-construction through ‘real’ and simulated objects.

In sum, the objects (including images and documents) in *Poisoned Pasts* therefore operated across three registers: (a) *indexical*: those which bear a direct relationship or connection to the programme or related processes of social/legal justice or professional standards; (b) *indicative*: reconstructed or ‘proxy’ objects that stand in for objects either lost, destroyed or only available via documented description; and (c) *imaginary*: content that attempts to give visual form to events that cannot be proven or verified but which figure strongly in the public narratives surrounding Coast. These were designed as necessarily ambiguous coordinates that might allow visitors to recall, contest, connect or discover additional perspectives on the programme.

Interrupted Sightlines

Exhibitions are spatialized experiences as much as they present collections of objects, media and interpretive materials. They are spaces we move through bodily, using multiple senses to receive and process what they offer to us, which in turn cannot be completely divorced from what we bring into exhibitions – our personal stories. Successful exhibitions generally present their content – objects, audiovisual media, interpretive material, in other words everything that is explicitly visually available to us as visitors – in close integration with

the space in which the exhibition will be experienced. In much the same way that typography can be used to reflect tone of speech (e.g. capitalized words in emails or short message services [SMSs] inferring heightened emotion), an exhibition's spatial design is a potent carrier of implicit communication about how its makers intend its content to be interpreted.

Whether an exhibition of contemporary art or social history, both exhibition makers and visitors agree that the 'book-on-a-wall' approach makes for a pretty fatal exhibition experience, particularly in an age of heavily abbreviated digital communication where our attention spans are largely being trained out of durational, closely focused concentration. Thus, objects available to make an exhibition must be considered in relation to their spatial interpretation. In fact, spatial arrangements such as juxtaposition, vertical hierarchy and order of encounter grant additional affordances to an exhibition's objects. How will they be placed in the exhibition space? What will support them – literally, conceptually and thematically? What, in turn, will they support?

With *Poisoned Pasts*, we actively sought to create spatial conditions whereby details of the Project Coast story may be happened upon, through a non-linear/non-chronological organization of material and multiple pathways through the space.

Figure 5.1 provides the floor layout for *Poisoned Pasts* when it was at Nelson Mandela Foundation Centre of Memory. The design of exhibition was conceptualized in the image-composition terms of 'Foreground' (the bottom area near the entrance), 'Middle-ground' and 'Background' zones, which reflects something about the content positioned within each, which was arranged in terms of three broadly thematic clusters of intersecting panels that should be considered 'in the round'.

The visual inventory of the exhibition consisted of panels of researched commentary with supporting visuals, predominantly visual reportage (photojournalism), historical documents and original artefacts interspersed with proxy objects.

The 'Foreground' included the title/contributors panel alongside a short (five minutes) introductory film *What Was Project Coast*, which offered visitors a core set of facts about the programme while explicitly acknowledging that the narrative relayed was only one of many possible narratives. The rear of this arrangement – 'Declarations and Silences' and 'Hostile Uses of Chemistry and Biology' – asked visitors to consider the current (as of mid-2016) climate of CBW policy and application internationally, and South Africa's declared position: which is that it never had an offensive programme. If visitors decided to look at both sides of the panel first, this statement acted as a position against which to test what was discovered within the exhibition. If visitors proceeded into the space and circled back around and read this last, it may have prompted a reconsideration of the honesty of South Africa's historical position and what this implied for the future.

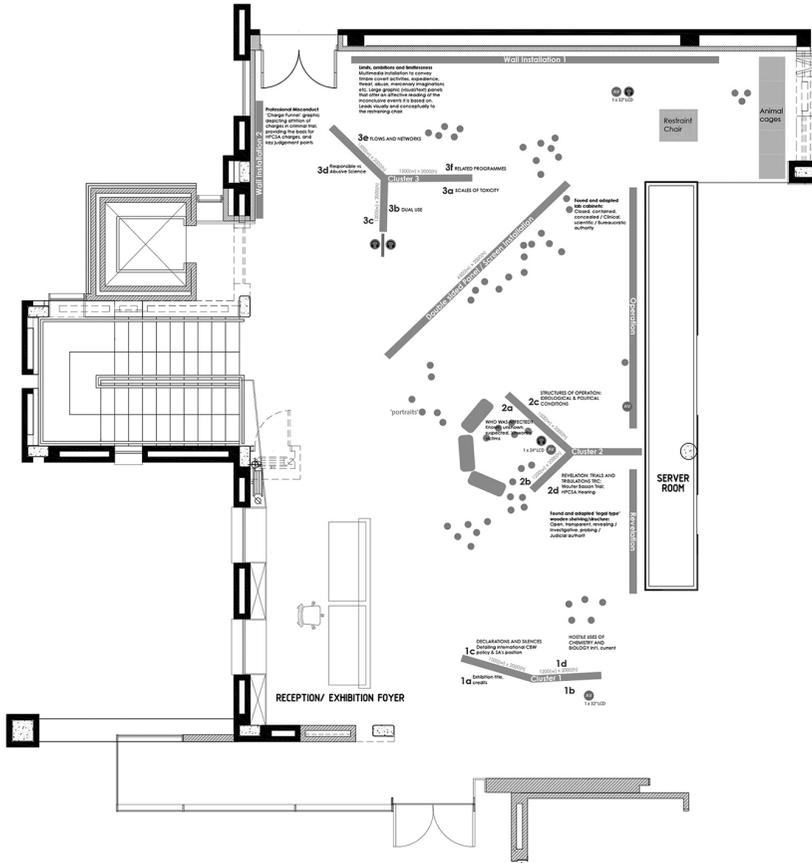


Figure 5.1 *Poisoned Past* exhibition design: floorplan for installation at Nelson Mandela Foundation, Johannesburg (Courtesy of TRACE).

The ‘Middle-ground’ zone was set against a wall. An alcove created by two intersecting screens created an intimate space in which to consider accounts of ‘Who Was Affected?’. A comprehensive narrative list of known, unknown, suspected and ‘unworthy’ victims was presented, and a small audiovisual station features archive footage of multiple narratives – Sarah da Fonseca telling the story of the suspicious death of her husband, Special Forces soldier Victor da Fonseca; Rev. Frank Chikane recounting his own poisoning; Maria Ntuli, mother of Jeremiah, one of the Nietverdiend 10 who were lured away together and killed when the van they were travelling in exploded; and Rev. Peter Kalangula describing various attempts on his life by South African security agents in Namibia.

Facing this alcove, two sets of shelves were visible against the back wall. These demarcated the thematic spaces of 'Operation' and 'Revelation' on the left and right sides, respectively, with supporting illustrated panels covering 'Structures of Operation: Ideological and Political Conditions' and 'Revelations: Trials and Tribulations', including the criminal and professional ethics trials of Dr Wouter Basson.

Allowing for necessary blurring of distinctions between the various zones of foreground/mid-ground/background, 'Operation' and 'Revelation' represented events and documentation in the public record, the public-facing aspects of what was known about Project Coast and chemical and biological warfare within the contemporary international context. These two spaces were physically separated but remain visually connected by a PVC strip-curtain of the kind found in hospitals or slaughterhouses. In addition to its dual connotations of being associated with the preservation and ending of life, the semi-transparent, semi-permeable membrane of the PVC strip-curtain was used because it enabled mediated transparency and movement. Diligent visitors trying to see (and move between) the displays could do so but only with effort. The displays were intended to indicate how concealment and disclosure blended together in the activities of Project Coast and the investigations into them. The texts, objects and audiovisual material for both areas was organized according to headings such as 'Hidden in Plain Sight', 'Locking Away' and 'Silences'.

A large screen on a near-architectural scale divided the rear part of the exhibition in two, on the diagonal, forcing a spatial closing-down of the 'Operation' space and masking what lay beyond. This 4.5-metre panel acted as the boundary between the conceptual 'Middle-ground' and 'Background' zones of the exhibition's spatial design. Entering this area was to travel further back into recent history, where things get slightly less sure-footed in terms of the official record, and perpetrators engage in a selective accounting of their activities. The side facing into the Operations space was boldly visual, depicting the shadow of a light aircraft cast onto a coastline as it flies above, beyond the camera's frame. Striations in the visual reproduction – making an asset of the media artefact known as 'interlacing' – denoted a video source for this image, captioned with testimony given in Basson's criminal trial in which witness Johan Theron (see above) described being involved in the clandestine dumping of sedated bodies of Angolan soldiers into the sea off the Namibian coast.

The reverse of this panel was a graphic visualization of the infamous 'Verkope Lys' ('Sales List') in which descriptions of the poisons on the list are set against various human protagonists and experimental animals, extending the trope of 'agents' through the figures of human, animal and chemical bodies. Here a visitor entered the 'Background' zone, in which Coast is placed within

an international and historical context of similar programmes and science's dual uses. 'Background' here has both contextual and covert connotations.

Set against a large-scale relief mural (*Limits and Limitlessness*) designed by Smith and rendered in a palette of (ultra)violets, blues and blacks that references some of the most violent and controversial actions of the programme, the third and final zone was arranged as a set of three intersecting panels and a related stand-alone wall panel to one side, and the reconstructed restraint chair, and a set of cages that once housed experimental animals to the other. The cages were loaned from one of the Project's former lab facilities, which was subsequently purchased by the South African government. Visitors could also listen to 'Science and Society', an audio montage by Smith featuring different perspectives on the roles, responsibilities and culpabilities of scientists associated with the programme, and consider an indicative reconstruction of an abandoned experiment in which scientists attempted to invest maize meal – a staple food – with cyanide. Three bowls of maize meal, tinted varying shades of blue, were presented in yellow enamel bowls of the kind associated with low-income households.²⁵

Hung opposite the restraint chair and animal cages, the stand-alone wall panel detailed the outcome of Basson's criminal trial, highlighting key points within the judgement, as well as the attrition of criminal charges that provided the basis for later charges brought by the Health Professions Council of South Africa. Within this zone, an animated film detailed Coast's exchanges and trades with international partners carried out under the auspices of numerous front companies which broke many of the economic sanctions imposed on Apartheid-era South Africa.

One notable feature evident from the layout schematic is the lack of clear sightlines. Within exhibition design, working with sightlines affords curators the opportunity to infer relationships between objects within and across the exhibition environment. Sightlines may be employed as active design elements, or incidental ones. Being alert to them affords the observant visitor an extra, implicit level of interpretation that is open to individual, subjective experience, and which may not reveal itself in the same way twice.

Within *Poisoned Past*s, however, we worked with sightlines as a way to *disrupt* an easy visual experience. This approach was informed by 'exploded view' drawings:

An exploded view drawing is a diagram, picture, schematic or technical drawing of an object, that shows the relationship or order of assembly of various parts. It shows the components of an object slightly separated by distance, or suspended in surrounding space in the case of a three-dimensional exploded diagram.²⁶

Common to engineering instruction manuals, the exploded-view schema will be familiar to students of anatomy albeit in object-form: 'exploded skull'

models show the various bones of the human head separated from each other on rods.²⁷ This principle of a complex object consists of interlocking parts was an appropriate metaphor for the relationship between content, space and active visitor we wished *Poisoned Past*s might embody. Yet more than just a pulling apart of objects to reveal their constitutive parts, we sought to reveal both what was given (explicit) and what was not (implicit) to engender a set of possibilities for the exhibition space.

The space of the Nelson Mandela Foundation was configured such that a visitor was unable to take in an overall view of the exhibition at once. As investigations into Project Coast has produced blind alleys, dead-ends and blank walls that occasionally open up into revelation and understanding, only partial views are possible. Thus, in order to see the ‘totality’ of what is on display, one must assume a willingness to explore, inspect. This placed a particular demand on a visitor; they needed to intentionally manoeuvre through objects, visuals and recordings, instead of following a linear thematic or chronological path. This demand was additionally one of time, a particular commitment to an exhibition experience that exceeds the purely visual. The questioning we wished to prompt was one of ‘What’s around the corner?’.

Depending on the choices made on the path through the exhibition, some matters would come into view but others will be occulted away. Individual

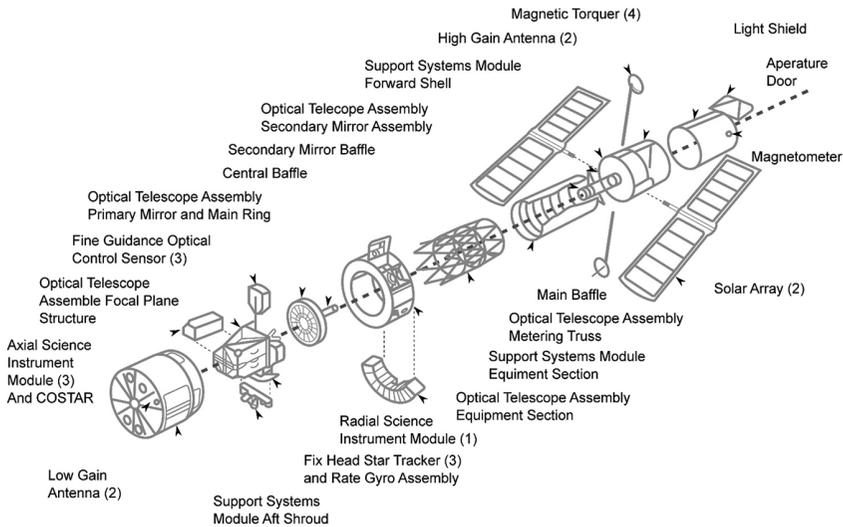


Figure 5.2 ‘Exploded view’ schematic diagram of the Hubble Space telescope by Andrew Buck, 2009. Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported license. <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:HubbleExploded.svg>

journeys through the displays necessarily entailed circling back on material visitors may have already seen, but with an altered background of knowledge. This is an embodiment of how investigations of troubled pasts lack a simple vantage point from which events can be reconstructed.

Form was matched by content because *Poisoned Past*s did not provide a structured storyline for meaning-making. Other than the introductory video that audiences may or may not have watched, no overview narration was provided. The clusters provide information on particular topics, but without the displays being linked together by any meta-arcs. By this, we encouraged connections to be made across thematic clusters without choreographing connections through forced or overstated juxtaposition.

Material Representations

Narratives that bear witness to previously unrecorded or otherwise-suppressed political violence are a critical feature of transitional justice processes. A preferred tactic for heritage exhibitions is to focus on narratives of those affected by events, perhaps because it mirrors the processes of transitional justice. But what if stories of victimhood are not available, or the nature of such stories cannot be adequately verified, or the boundaries between victim and perpetrator are fluid, subverting our conventional ethics?

Witnessing, as Eamonn Carrabine reminds us, has both a juridical connotation – ‘seeing with one’s own eyes’ – and a religious one – ‘testifying to that which cannot be seen . . . bearing witness’.²⁸ A seemingly endless torrent of powerful victim testimonies enfolded with acts of forgiveness and absolution – and rejections of such conciliatory gestures – characterized the TRC process overall in South Africa. This was so, not least, in the figure of Joyce Mtimkhulu, whose son Siphwiwo was poisoned, most likely from thallium. Although this did not kill him, his later disappearance and murder resulted in his body never being found. This lack of material evidence of a life lived was at the core of his mother’s demands before the TRC. She appeared before the commission in 1996 with a handful of his hair which she had collected as it fell out, a direct effect of the poisoning. Without bones to bury, she asked, how could she resign herself to his death and do the work of grieving?

In the case of Project Coast, considered responses to the questions ‘Who were the victims of the programme?’ and ‘How did they suffer?’ need to be told, at least in part, in the negative. That is, what has not been told, what cannot be told or what will not be told would need to figure prominently. This is so because records were not made, many were destroyed, few witnesses have spoken up, appropriate questions were not posed, a ‘need-to-know’ principle was deliberately applied to ensure plausible deniability and so on. But the

problems at stake go further than a lack of information. Not all those killed or injured as part of Project Coast would likely be regarded as meriting the label of victim for the purpose of memorial histories.

One classification for who was affected by the programme would be as follows:

Identified – There are few identified victims who can be linked directly to the programme. The most prominent individual identified as a victim of poisons produced by Project Coast has been the anti-Apartheid campaigner and former Secretary General of the South Africa Council of Churches, Reverend Frank Chikane.

Nameless – For a variety of reasons, those who were determined to have been assassinated have been largely unidentified. Who would be the target for the concealed weapons like the laced chocolates or envelope glue was something senior scientists could often rarely more than vaguely speculate about because under Project Coast, they were deliberately kept in the dark. For field operatives, at times, targeted individuals less prominent than Frank Chikane were not remembered in name during post-Apartheid investigations. They might be referred to loosely as something like ‘friend of black dissident’,²⁹ an ‘ANC member’ or a ‘foreign operative’.

Unpursued – Many of the soldiers claimed to be killed have not had the circumstance of their deaths investigated in detail, and most remain unnamed. A 1989 proclamation (only revealed because of the High Court trial of Wouter Basson) had granted amnesty to all SADF and others for crimes committed in Namibia prior to its first democratic elections in 1989. Citing this amnesty, the judge in the trial threw out charges against Basson related to the murder of some 200 SWAPO fighters, plans to poison the water supply of a SWAPO refugee camp with cholera and the murder of an official. The other charges were related to conspiracy to murder in Swaziland and Mozambique through the supply of poisons. As these had taken place outside of South Africa, even if they were planned within it, the trial judge ruled they could not be prosecuted in the country.

Numberless – Surviving documentation indicates an extensive range of animals were tested on as part of the programme. To name but some instances, beagle dogs and baboons were administered the pesticide paraoxen in varying mixtures. Rats were given poisons, baboons were given rat poisons. Tests on one species led to confirmation tests being done on another – pigs, rabbits, horses and primates were all studied as models for the effects of chemical on humans. It is not known, though, how many non-human animals died to find out how humans die.

Flawed – Many of those who suffered were not strangers to the South African security apparatus. Whether soldiers from neighbouring countries,

members of the SADF who were seen to pose a security threat, or dissidents working abroad, not all were in a direct oppositional relation to the Apartheid South Africa and thus not all stories easily fit in common post-Apartheid narratives.

Unfamiliar – Others who might be considered as victims did not suffer directly from the operations of the programme, but rather from the fallout from its revelation – for instance, the children and other relations of Project Coast staff.

Against this classification, we can further note that with few named victims or established voices post-TRC to assert the needs or interests of victims, the narrative about Project Coast (staccato and broken as it has been) has become a narrative of ‘perpetrators’ – and exclusively white perpetrators at that. It has been a story of their motives, intentions and capabilities, all of which have been contested. Basson as head of Project Coast has been identified as the secret keeper (and in this maintains tremendous power over those who believe they or their family members might have fallen victim to the programme). He has also garnered nearly all the attention. The reconciliation narrative of Project Coast is thus a partial story, a story of contested perpetration, revelation and reconciliation where the victims have had little voice, little identity and thus in which there could be little footing for securing forgiveness – if and when it was sought.

In the exhibition space of *Poisoned Pasts*, our response to these considerations resulted in a number of design choices. Instead of limiting ourselves to specific individuals that could be documented as having been poisoned with products proved as deriving from Project Coast, the exhibition sought to honour all those individuals who were verified, suspected or intended targets of poisoning by the agencies of the Apartheid state. In the main, the stories of those affected with this wide-ranging criterion were told in a central panel in Cluster 2 that incorporated video interviews of two affected individuals, as described earlier.

More was done though than these conventional forms of representation. Scattered throughout the exhibition were 257 small portrait panels suspended from the ceiling portraying those affected. Some of the panels take the form of a graphic silhouette, some have names, others are blank and only offer a vague description of an individual, such as ‘POW’ (prisoner of war). See figure 5.3.

Our decision to suspend these icono/graphic representations throughout the space was intended to work against the relegation of victimhood by framing these individuals, both known and unknown, as a vital form of absent-presence. Repeatedly encountering them within the space of the exhibition was intended to point to the viral quality of collective trauma, asserting that if such experiences are insufficiently acknowledged or understood, they will continue to produce ghosts.



Figure 5.3 Installation view of *Poisoned Pasts* at the Nelson Mandela Foundation, depicting portrait panels representing those affected by the programme, suspended in front of the 'Operations' display. They partially obscure the sightline to the 'Background' zone, the animal cages and the reconstruction of the restraint chair. (Copyright: Nelson Mandela Foundation).

The fugitive figure of the ghost entered the critical humanities with the 'spectral turn', ushered in by Jacques Derrida's *Spectres of Marx* (1993, trans. 1994).³⁰ Following Derrida, Peeren and del Pilar Blanco (2013) suggest that 'rather than being expelled, the ghost should remain, be lived *with*, as a conceptual metaphor signaling the ultimate disjointedness of ontology, history, inheritance, materiality and ideology. . . . As related to "the deconstructive thinking of the trace, of iterability, of prosthetic synthesis, of supplementarity, and so forth," the ghost ceases to be seen as obscurantist and becomes, instead, a figure of clarification with a specifically ethical and political potential' (emphasis in the original).³¹ They further propose that the technique of 'spectrography', the writing of *and with* the spectral, offers revisionist history and geography a particular ethics that asserts relationality between people and places; it locates events and protagonists and speaks to the intersectional and transformational effects of bodies acting upon on another (2009: 483). These were values that we hoped would be communicated through our representations of those that suffered. We also intended our treatment of victims as fronting the agency (and responsibility) of those who represent or author contested pasts.

Practically, these dispersed and suspended placeholders for the absent and the missing were also intended to encourage a connection between events

and people within the exhibition's narrative clusters. Wherever appropriate, affected persons were displayed in proximity to displays that describe particular circumstances. For instance, the cluster of SWAPO soldiers is installed near the image of the Namibian coastline.

Displaying those affected in this way also added a dimension to the 'sightlines' points mentioned earlier that informed the overall spatial layout. These suspended panels interrupted (and therefore animated) a focused set of thematic zones that would ordinarily be approached and read in a relatively straightforward – horizontal – way. Suspending images from the ceiling, versus displaying them on surfaces that are anchored to the floor, drew attention to spatial features such as mass (elements clustered together or widely spaced), as well as height and volume; they redirected the gaze away from a primarily horizontal reading experience and created a differentiated focal range that includes the 'surrounding' space that constituted the overall space of the exhibition.

CONCLUSION

A major source of challenge in giving accounts of the past is that the process of telling previously hidden stories will be many things to many people: resisted, traumatic, celebratory, cathartic, even banal. Some may choose to draw a line under what has passed in order to move on. For others, the past will continue to push into the present, often in discomfiting ways that cannot be put aside. As Paul Williams argued in *Memorial Museums: The Global Rush to Commemorate Atrocities*, at least two critical questions arise in commemorating troubling events: 'What is the primary story to be told? Who should be authorized to tell it?'³²

Williams identifies two popular approaches employed by those (usually institutions) with atrocity-commemoration mandates: to 'offer lessons' and to 'stage an intervention'. Conventionally, this is done by establishing the facts and visibility of the event in question, while acknowledging that current conditions represent 'a decisive break from the conditions of the [original] event'.³³ Williams suggests that a key appeal of memorial heritage projects is their dual offer of 'a concrete instance for thinking about extreme conditions and moral choices' that have defined recent history while also satisfying the lures of secrecy and danger and the enduring effects of mortality and loss. Through a layering of factual telling, emotional resonance and imaginative conjecture, memorial heritage projects allow us to 'experiment mentally with the furthest boundaries of what life can involve'.³⁴

Minding such considerations, during the development of *Dis-eases of Secrecy* and *Poisoned Pasts*, a question loomed large for us: What is the (*our*)

intention behind recounting the past? In other words, what do we hope histories (particularly histories of harm) can help *do*? Instruct, inform, educate? Or bear witness, honour, remember or advocate for justice? Or all or none of these?

Needless to say our individual motives, along with our respective disciplinary expertise, were somewhat different, yet complementary. They may have even changed with time; certainly the scope of initial ambitions is checked through the practicalities of exhibition making. Presenting 'old' information in new ways to new audiences – families of those affected, young scientists, the 'born-frees' for whom the TRC exists purely as a historical fact – was a common goal. Gathering visitor feedback is really the only way to construct a sense of how far we succeeded in encouraging active engagement and meaning-making among those who have visited the exhibition to date.

Dis-eases of Secrecy and *Poisoned Past*s were not intended simply to document what took place under Project Coast. Rather we set out ways to work with what is absent, missing or contested in part to provoke questioning about the limitations of existing means to deal with oppressive pasts. Absences were not been treated as holes to be filled in, sources of frustrations or deficiencies in analysis, but rather as defining features of what was offered. Embracing the limits and recognizing the potentialities of this, we strove to promote a reconsideration of stable understandings, to free spaces for additional relevances to be brought to bear and to engage audiences in becoming curious about the relevance of the past for the future. In addition, we sought to explore ways in which the printed page and the site of an exhibition provide alternative possibilities for working with and against material forms and conventions. This was done, for instance, by presenting 'authentic' and fashioned objects together; layered and competing voices of victims, perpetrators and investigators; and non-linear narrative constructions that questioned a singular understanding.

Such strategies open themselves up to risk, including the risks of illegibility, obfuscation and frustration. But they also hold the potential for productive reconsideration of past traumas and injustice. As Maggie Nelson reminds us, with reference to critical cultural practices broadly referred to as 'tactical media', risky creative strategies are necessary to

force the spinners and suppressors of certain facts out of the woodwork. The brutality of those facts must then hang anew, in open air, for all to see. This is not an exposure, precisely; the facts have typically been there all along. It is a means of re-attending to that which is already visible, of reconsidering that we may already know. It is, in short, a recalibration of the function of knowledge itself.³⁵

Indeed, she insists, recalling Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, such strategies may be the only way to move beyond 'the rather fixated question: Is a particular

piece of knowledge true, and how can we know? to the further questions: What does knowledge *do* – the pursuit of it, the having and exposing of it, the receiving again of knowledge one already knows?'.³⁶

In our contemporary moment where notions of 'truth' and the (f)actual are being increasingly destabilized, among their other aims, *Poisoned Past*s and *The Dis-eases of Secrecy* sought to re-attend to the factual aspects of dissonant historical events that are, in Nelson's words, 'already visible' post-TRC, but which, through various processes, both willful and circumstantial, despite great civic efforts, have been re-buried, re-secreted and re-concealed. That we continue to struggle with learning lessons from history demands that the conversation be re-opened anew, in the hope that a new generation may receive it, and use it, differently.

NOTES

- 1 Brian Rappert and Chandre Gould, *Dis-eases of Secrecy: Tracing History, Memory and Justice* (Johannesburg: Jacana, 2017).
- 2 Work underpinning aspects of *The Dis-eases of Secrecy* was supported by Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (DSTL) and Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) award, 'The Formation and Non-formation of Security Concerns' (ES/K011308/1), as well as a British Academy Newton Advanced Fellowship, 'Cataloguing Secrets, Transforming Justice' (SL-06825). A dataset for empirical research associated with the ESRC, DSTL and AHRC is available at <https://discover.ukdataservice.ac.uk/catalogue/?sn=851599&type=Data%20catalogue>. *Poisoned Past*s: *Legacies of South Africa's Chemical and Biowarfare Programme* was also supported by the British Academy, an ESRC Impact Accelerator Award and the Nelson Mandela Foundation.
- 3 Mike Crang and Nigel Thrift, 'Introduction', in *Thinking Space*, eds. Mike Crang and Nigel Thrift (London: Routledge, 2000); Martin Jones, 'Phase Space: Geography, Relational Thinking, and Beyond', *Progress in Human Geography*, 33, no. 4 (2009), 487–506.
- 4 C. Gould and A. W. M. Hay, 'A Decade of Deceit: The South African Biological Weapons Programme', in *Deadly Cultures: Biological Weapons since 1945*, eds. M. Wheelis, M. Dando and L. Rosza (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005); C. Gould and P. Folb, 'The South African Chemical and Biological Warfare Program: An Overview', *Nonproliferation Review*, 7, no. 3 (2000), i–297.
- 5 Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 'Volume Two – Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa Report' (Cape Town: TRC, 1998).
- 6 C. Gould and Peter Folb, *Project Coast: Apartheid's Chemical and Biological Warfare Programme* (Geneva: UNIDIR and Centre for Conflict Resolution, 2003).
- 7 W. Basson, 'Testimony at the TRC Hearing into Chemical and Biological Warfare' (Cape Town: TRC, 31 July 1998).

- 8 Marlène Burger and Chandré Gould, *Secret and Lies* (Cape Town: Zebra, 2002).
- 9 For instance, for those who did not speak or read Afrikaans, the vast majority of the testimony and documentary evidence presented in the trial was inaccessible because the trial was conducted in Afrikaans. Even for those fluent in the language, the extent and duration of the trial would be testing. Lasting over thirty months, involving 153 witnesses and relying on thousands of pages of documents that dealt with financial and drug charges beyond those associated with chemical and biological weapons, the sheer amount of information and number of contradictory claims produced created major impediments to determining what had happened. And in a bizarre twist, it became clear in 2015 after attempts by one of the authors (CG) to access the court record that the official transcript of the trial had gone missing from the court records frustrating later attempts to access it. All that remains is the judgement and daily notes taken by a Marlene Burger (a skilled court reporter) and Gould that were published on the Internet during the trial.
- 10 N. Knobel, 'Testimony to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Chemical and Biological Warfare Hearings' (Cape Town: TRC, 8 July 1998).
- 11 Citizen, 'Chemical Warfare Papers Not Destroyed – Witness', *The Citizen*, 9 July 1998; Cape Argus. "'Wouter's Disk" Key to Germ Warfare', *Cape Argus*, 8 July 1998.
- 12 Burger and Gould, *Secret and Lies*, 26.
- 13 Interview Project Coast scientist (requested anonymity) 20 August 2013.
- 14 See, for instance, O. Olwage, 'Witch-Hunt against Basson Should End Now', *The Star*, 19 July 2012, available at <https://www.iol.co.za/the-star/witch-hunt-against-basson-should-end-now-1344597>
- 15 Laurie Nathan and Patricia Lewis, 'Preface', in *Project Coast: Apartheid's Chemical and Biological Warfare Programme*. UNIDIR/2002/12 (Geneva: UNIDIR, 2002), ix.
- 16 For more on this, see B. Rappert and Chandre Gould, *Dis-eases of Secrecy: Tracing History Memory and Justice* (Johannesburg: Jacana, 2017).
- 17 Academy of Sciences of South Africa, *The State of Biosafety and Biosecurity in South Africa* (Pretoria: ASSAf, 2015), 103–107.
- 18 Filippa Lentzos, ed., *Biological Threats in the 21st Century* (London: Imperial College Press, 2016), 162.
- 19 Reports from this dialogue series are available at <https://www.nelsonmandela.org/content/page/nelson-mandela-international-dialogues1>.
- 20 Chandre Gould, 'The Trouble with Memory Work: Reflections on the Mandela Dialogues', 27 February 2017, available at <https://www.nelsonmandela.org/news/entry/reflections-from-the-2016-mandela-dialogues>.
- 21 Following the spirit of M. Taussig, 'Viscerality, Faith, and Skepticism', in *Magic and Modernity*, eds. B. Meyer and P. Pels (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003).
- 22 S. Lindqvist, *A History of Bombing* (London: Granta, 2003), i.
- 23 Beyond the points already made, additional intellectual origins for *Dis-eases of Secrecy* include previous efforts by Rappert to produce experimental forms of

writing intended to not only speak to how concealment and disclosure interplay within diplomatic communities but also how this necessarily affects the writing of social researchers about these communities. See B. Rappert, *Experimental Secrets: International Security, Codes, and the Future of Research* (New York: University Press of America, 2009); B. Rappert, 'Revealing and Concealing Secrets in Research: The Potential for the Absent', *Qualitative Research*, 10, no. 5 (2010), 571–588; B. Rappert 'Present Absences: Hauntings and Whirlwinds in – Graphy', *Social Epistemology*, 28, no. 1 (2014), 41–55.

- 24 Bennett, *op.cit.*
- 25 The experiment was abandoned when it proved impossible to prevent the cyanide turning the maize meal blue.
- 26 Wikipedia, 'Entry for Exploded-view Drawing', available at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Exploded-view_drawing.
- 27 Ostensibly to demonstrate that despite appearing to be made of two parts (cranium and mandible), a human skull is generally accepted to consist of twenty-two separate bones (excluding ear ossicles).
- 28 E. Carrabine, 'Just Images: Aesthetics, Ethics and Visual Criminology', *British Journal of Criminology*, 52, no. 3 (2012), 467.
- 29 S. Van Rensburg, 'Testimony of at the TRC Hearing into Chemical and Biological Warfare' (Cape Town: TRC 9 June 1998).
- 30 J. Derrida, *Spectres of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International* (New York: Routledge, 1994). See also U. Baer, *Spectral Evidence: The Photography of Trauma* (London: MIT Press, 2002) and A. F. Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (London: University of Minnesota Press, 2008).
- 31 E. Peeren and M. del Pilar Blanco, *The Spectralities Reader: Ghosts and Haunting in Contemporary Cultural Theory* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 7.
- 32 P. Williams, *Memorial Museums: The Global Rush to Commemorate Atrocities* (Oxford: Berg, 2007), 106.
- 33 *Ibid.*, 121.
- 34 *Ibid.*, 142–143.
- 35 M. Nelson, *The Art of Cruelty: A Reckoning* (New York: WW Norton, 2012), 161. Tactical media are associated with 'ad-busting' or 'copy-left' practices, a form of visual/media hacking that has its historical origins in the *detournement* practices of the Situationist International. Actions by the Yes Men, for example, whom Nelson is directly referencing here, have gained considerable visibility, not least because they have confronted multi-national structures and organizations that represent considerable economic power coupled with absolute ethical failure.
- 36 *Ibid.*