Marguerite Poland and the *Shades* Archive: The Use of the Author's Archive in Close Analysis.

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Abstract

Marguerite Poland's *Shades* combines the histories of South Africa's Eastern Cape and her own missionary ancestors to create a novel which utilises fictionality for postcolonial criticism and a search for identity. *Shades* is therefore deeply situated within the historical archive on which the text leans heavily to provide credibility to the semi-fictional historical narrative. However, a closer examination of Poland's research points towards the existence of a cache of information which informed the writing of her text. This thesis has consequently termed this concept the 'author's archive'. When the author's archive is examined in conjunction with *Shades*, a deeper understanding and far stronger analysis emerges – resulting in authoritative conclusions rather than speculation.

The purpose of this thesis is ultimately to introduce the theoretical concept of an author removing and manipulating material from the archive with the intention of constructing their own archive of sources. Because of the focus on the creation of a theoretical framework, a theoretical rather than methodological approach is most suited. This thesis has therefore sought to construct and define a theory to examine the relationship between the auctorial and the archival rather than create and apply a method of analysis.

Poland's *Shades* presents itself as an ideal case study due to Poland's intentional and obvious employment of the archive. Firstly, her adaptation and subsequent utilisation of intermingled archival fact and original fiction prompts an investigation of what led Poland to select specific material from the archive. Secondly, Poland's characters are predominantly based on fact. Many were inspired by the oral and written history of her missionary ancestors, which she in turn adapts and subverts through fictionalisation to suit her narrative. An analysis of these characters provides an opportunity to examine Poland's interweaving of historical versus imaginative due to their varying range of fictionality.

The reconstruction and examination of the archive Poland created for *Shades* has undoubtedly led to a substantial analysis of *Shades* and Poland's creation of the text. However, a conclusion has also been reached that analysing the author's archive reveals how fiction can be supported by fact rather than fact simply supported by fiction, and how this can lead to the emergence of an accreditable historical narrative.

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Introduction

Marguerite Poland's novel, *Shades* (1993), is a microcosmic portrayal of the socio-political history of the 19th century in the Eastern Cape, written in the medium of historical fiction and told through the angle of a love story. Set primarily on a mission station in the Keiskamma region, the novel follows the lives and relationships of the inhabitants within the complex setting of colonial versus amaXhosa[1] agitation. Poland inspects the timeframe through a historical, geological and sociological lens, investigating the turmoil induced by the start of the migrant labour system, the effects of the rinderpest and the violence of the South African War. While the characters and their setting are written from the perspective of white missionaries, Poland simultaneously weaves in Xhosa traditions and beliefs while emphasising the spiritual quality of the Eastern Cape landscape. The cultural hybridity of her writing lends *Shades* a unique take on missionary history - confronting its legacy and problematising the one-sided historical accounts found in the South African archive. Poland draws from her own ancestral history, and most of the main characters are based on her ancestors. Even the mission station - St. Matthias - on which *Shades* is set is in fact based on St. Matthew's mission station which still stands today. Her main characters are thus grounded in factuality, but given life through fictionality. Characters who play significant roles in the text who are not based on specific historical figures were created through an amalgamation of fiction and general historical factuality to support historical accuracy.

Walter Brownley is both the focaliser and protagonist throughout the duration of *Shades*, arriving as an outsider with what seems to him the impossible task of assimilating into an unfamiliar society and setting. He quickly becomes intrigued by the mission philosophy of the experienced resident missionary, Charles Farborough, but even more so by his young daughter, Frances. Walter's introduction to the imperious Victor Drake completes the underlying triangle that drives the novel's narrative – Frances feels that she should be in love with Victor as he is closer to her age and the more attractive choice, but finds greater security in Walter. The novel takes us through two years of Walter and Frances's burgeoning relationship and in the process shows the reader a microcosm of South Africa's complex colonial history on the cusp of the 20th

[1] This thesis uses 'Xhosa' as an umbrella term for the Xhosa cultural identity. It encompasses amaXhosa (the people) and isiXhosa (the language).

century. The novel's underlying socio-political history is anchored by four central themes that are situated in certain characters. They include: firstly, Reverend Brompton's Victorianism and archaic 'civilising' mission philosophy which pits him – to his detriment – against the Africanist independence and traditions of his assistant, whom he renames Pusey. The combative dichotomy of philosophies is mediated in the long run by Walter's inclusive approach that is developed in the isolation of the mission – Mbokothwe – which he takes over from Brompton and to which he feels banished.

Secondly, the themes of masculine repression and societal expectation which are explored through the character of Victor. His personality and identity are based almost entirely on a fundamental need for a recognition of his 'heroism' after a lifetime of trying to live up to his father's heroic legacy, alongside maintaining the 'golden boy' facade to which Frances and Crispin's reverence is essential. Victor's motivation is supported by particular historical events such as the 'Anglo-Boer' (South African) War in which he fights and his evolution into a labour broker central to the migrant labour system for the mines that so devastated the black communities he grew up in. Thirdly, the role of women trapped in their colonial social constraints is explored through the three main female figures at St. Matthias. Emily Farborough – wife to Charles and matriarch of the mission station – is obsessed with her rose garden which is metaphorical for her own disconnect with a country in which she feels she does not belong, and her longing for her homeland of England. In contrast, her daughter, Frances Farborough, thrives in the African sun, compared by Poland not to the roses of her mother but to the indigenous aloes on the mission. Frances ultimately breaks free of her mother's expectation for her to be a 'proper' Victorian woman when she and Walter finally end up together in the final pages of the novel. Helmina Smythe, the third central female character, represents the limited social options forced by class status.

Fourthly, the response to colonialism and proto-apartheid is explored through a series of black characters whose attitude towards the injustices they face provides a range of the options open to black South Africans at the time *Shades* is set. Benedict Matiwane, adopted at birth by Emily, is increasingly politically conscientised by the racist behaviour he sees around him and becomes a powerful voice of independent black thought. Conversely, Mzantsi, the church catechist, is an unwitting 'Uncle Tom' who does not even understand his own humiliation. Kobus,

the local headman who manipulates customs and mission ethics to his own ends and Nowasha – the woman who does the washing – signify the nomenclature of lost identity by the victims of colonialism: we never even learn their real names. Sonwabo is similarly reduced to 'Sonnyboy' in the racist mining compounds.

'Shades' is a novel of identity and personal exploration by the characters and by the author herself as she recreated and fictionalised key members of her family and explored their development. Two of them, after all, were her great-grandparents. It is, in essence, a love story that harnesses the history of the author's family and country. This thesis argues that Poland created an archive of information made up of selected material from Eastern Cape history and personal ancestral material from which she drew to write her novel. It argues that a reassembling and an assessment of this archive - which has been termed here as the 'author's archive' - provide valuable insight into Poland's research process, her choices in selecting particular material, how she subsequently structured the gathered material and ultimately how she produced *Shades* as a literary text. The central argument is concerned with the relationship between Poland's archive and *Shades*, and how the author's archive influenced and informed the writing of the text. The focus, therefore, is on the archive which turns non-fiction into fiction, and seeks to suggest how theorising the transformation the archive undertakes to become fiction can by and large be useful.

This thesis at first approached the concept of the author's archive and its role in the construction of a literary work from a methodological standing point. This stance had in turn originated in a previously conducted analysis of James Joyce's *Ulysses* which examined the notion of a 'database aesthetic'. Christiane Paul states in the anthology *Database Aesthetics: Art in the Age of Information Overload* that the database aesthetic "is frequently used to describe the aesthetic principles applied in imposing the logic of the database to any type of information filtering data collections, and visualizing data" (95). While helpful, Paul's definition of the database aesthetic proved to be too vague for the purpose of the arguments being constructed. More suitable were Jessica Pressman and Kent Emerson's assertions of utilising the 'database aesthetic' term as a method of demonstrating James Joyce's retrieval of information from an unseen database and his method of structuring and storing this information outside of his novel. The sparking point for this project's research question thus originated from the argument that an independent collection of information was constructed for the purpose of influencing a work of

literature - based specifically on Joyce's manipulation of information in conjunction with his text, *Ulysses*.

However, the boundaries of an archive are not rigid as is characteristic of the database, while databases are incapable of the problematic and complex quality which is fundamental to the archive. Poland's archive for *Shades* proved particularly illuminating in this regard. As Poland's archive was reconstructed, it became more apparent that attempting to construct a series of analytical tools in order to form a method of analysis contradicted the nature of Poland's research process, her archive and *Shades* itself as a historical fiction text deeply situated within subjectivity. The objectivity required to define a body of information as a database differed too starkly from the subjective nature of Poland's collection of information, and *Shades* and *Ulysses* far too removed for comparative analysis. Defining Poland's collage of various sources as an archive rather than database therefore became far more appropriate. Consequently, this thesis took on a theoretical stance, aiming instead to define an archival theory rather than build a method of analysis. This project now intends instead to construct a theoretical framework based on the 'author's archive' concept, the relationship between archive and text - ultimately achieved through a close analysis of *Shades* and its archive.

Amazwi South African Museum of Literature and Rhodes University's Cory Library were the two formal archival institutions that were physically visited for the purpose of reconstructing Poland's archive. Poland had spent time in the Cory archives researching Eastern Cape history - only to later come across Reverend Cyril Wynche's letterbooks which he had written during his time at St. Matthew's as an assistant priest to her great-great-grandfather. Retracing Poland's archive meant spending time in Cory reading through the primary material she had taken snippets from. Time had to be spent in Amazwi due to the physical material stored in its archive which cannot be accessed elsewhere. In both instances, the two archives yielded essential material needed to build up an archive on Poland and *Shades* - prompted by the initial investigation of the archive Poland herself constructed. However, drawing from the Cory Library and Amazwi archives meant that the information from both archives inadvertently influenced the archive being constructed for the purpose of the thesis - and therefore the developing analysis. This influence is not only in the sense that both institutions played a big role in contributing data, but also the influence of the institutions themselves and their history. Thus, there has been the need to retain a self-awareness

when dealing with these sources - keeping in mind what information is included and what appears to be missing - and treat the material with an awareness of the positionality of the institution in which it is housed.

An archive unique to this thesis was constructed through the research process undertaken which ironically informed the analysis of Poland's archive and its use in the writing of *Shades*. Research on archival and literary theory, as well as Eastern Cape history were the broadest and most accessible topics, followed by work within academia which focussed more specifically on historical fiction. The big gap in the newly-fledged archive was Poland's own thoughts and feelings on *Shades* and her writing. While there were several reviews and interviews that were archived in Amazwi, there was minimal primary material when it came to the author's personal opinion. It was only through contacting Poland that knowledge became available, and it was lucky that she was very hospitable to sharing what she could. Poland emailed scanned copies of several pages of her great-grandmother's memoir alongside an unpublished document titled "Some Notes on my Writing". She was also willing to be interviewed - which ultimately provided some of the most important evidence for this thesis. Without Poland's cooperation, such a close understanding of Poland's archive would not have been possible considering how few resources were publicly accessible or even existed. The juggling of accessible and inaccessible sources ultimately prompted questions around the continuity of the archive - both in terms of the author's archive and the archive as an institution.

Poland specifically mentions four sources of information that were important to the creation of the novel in *Shades*'s acknowledgement: the memoir of her great-grandmother (Daisy Farborough), family photo albums and papers, her great-great-grandfather's Bible and Reverend Cyril Wynche's letterbooks. Wynche's letterbooks proved the most useful when it came to the fine details of mission life as he had written a copious number of letters detailing the mundane particulars of daily life at St. Matthew's. Poland went on to use not only Wynche's letters to add a realistic edge to her writing, but also the man himself as inspiration for Brompton - an imperialist missionary who goes mad on an isolated mission station. Poland's great-great-grandfather's Bible included various annotations and marked passages which allowed a close comprehension of Reverend Charles Taberer due to the very personal nature of the Bible as a possession. Charles Taberer contributed characteristics and a persona for Father Charles, who plays the role of

founding figure and patriarch in *Shades*. Taberer's significance is illustrated by the continued traces of his life - Charles Taberer's name is still present on the foundation stone of the St. Matthew's church which he placed himself.

Poland has stated that her great-grandmother's memoir was significant in giving authenticity to her writing. Daisy wrote her memoir much later in her life so it was not a 'diary' of events as they occurred. They were instead memories and often very personal moments, and Poland used several anecdotes that she worked into her writing. Some instances in *Shades* show very obvious parallels to Daisy's memoir, but other extracts show more distant signs of being related to the source Poland drew from. For example, Daisy writes: "Flowing through the garden in front of the house was a clear stream of water. Daddy had the furrow made a mile away, so as to lead the water onto the ground and our garden [...] To our delight, many eels used to appear, and were caught with bent pins and bits of red flannel" (Farborough). Poland describes in *Shades*: "Way off, where pasture was lush around a water furrow, three young men and a girl were fishing" (*Shades* 9). Later, Daisy writes how, 'My mother's rose garden was her pride and joy", which Poland converts to "Emily Farborough went to her rose garden. She closed the little gate knowing she could count on no intrusion. This place was hers and it was sacrosanct" (Farborough; Poland *Shades* 250). While these examples give minute details of similarities, the connections between Daisy's memoir and *Shades* provide evidence of how Poland drew inspiration and generated ideas through reproducing Farborough's experiences. It directly points towards how Poland drew from an archive of information which linked directly to primary sources.

Michel Foucault makes the argument in *Archaeology of Knowledge* that: "The analysis of the archive [...] involved a privileged region: of time that surrounds our presence, which overhangs it, and which indicates it in its otherness" (130). His statement pushes the idea of the analyser's lack of self-awareness when it comes to the time and space they are working within. It also raises the question: is the central problem when it comes to analysis of the archive therefore 'self-awareness' or 'awareness of the difference between self and the subject's context'? A researcher interrogating the history of 1890s South Africa in the present day is undoubtedly faced with different challenges and experiences compared what Poland would have faced three decades ago; South Africa certainly is not the same place as it was in the late 1990s. A researcher must note, therefore, how the time period, the setting and personal experience all play a distinctive role – for

the author, the text and the researcher. Foucault does speak about the subjectivity that surrounds the analyser rather than solely the archive – a concept which is surely applicable when analysing not only the author and their own archive, but also the impact of the researcher/reader's own subjectivity as they engage with a text.

Acknowledging Poland's strong personal connection to the characters who mimic her ancestral family is essential to understanding the subjectivity of her archive - and consequently as a means of pulling fact from fiction. The subjectivity shaped by the author's own ideologies and how these ideologies in turn shape the archive must therefore be identified in order to understand the makeup of the archive and to distinguish the motives behind specific creative choices. Furthermore, the distinction of fact within *Shades* and its archive from the fictionalisation Poland uses to manipulate factuality allows for the reconstruction of Poland's archive and the identification of historical accuracies. The archive from which *Shades* was developed is undeniably unique in and of itself, with the archive personalised and melded to the literary work in question. However, while Poland is subjective towards the material she writes on, her subjectivity appears to come with a self-awareness. The acknowledgement at the beginning of *Shades* provides evidence when she apologises to her great-grandfather and great-great-grandfather for any "liberties I might have taken with their privacy or with the events of their lives" (Poland *Shades* 'Acknowledgements'). "[B]ut I know" Poland continues, "they will acknowledge, because I am the inheritor of their history, that I have loved them greatly and respect the memory of each" (Poland *Shades* 'Acknowledgements').

Sources were often selected due to the emotional response they elicited and their central 'feeling' and adapted as Poland felt necessary. Importantly, Poland made certain that the altered material retained the underlying 'feeling' as it was the distinct emotional impression which was most important to what Poland was trying to convey. Poland spoke in the interview of how:

> There's a lot of fiction in terms of what, say, Frances and Victor and Crispin and everybody did. But it's very much in the spirit of what I knew of my family, how they spoke about them, the letters that were written, Granny's memoir, and of course Gerald Bussy – my great-uncle who told me about the mission to start with. That, I think, is the real spark of my interest (Interview)

Sentimentality leaks into the moments of heightened emotion in particular scenes, but Poland adheres to historical 'laws' of what is 'fact'. She was committed to leaving important details and

facts unaltered - specifically about South African history and certain specifics about her family. She stated in an interview with the *Sunday Independent* that, "The main challenge was getting to grips with the complex and turbulent history of South Africa at the turn of the century and trying to weave it into the intimate story of a particular family without losing the focus of the very personal narrative concerning the protagonists" ("Meet the Author"). She voiced at a later stage that, "I don't ever want to appear patronising or to try to re-write folk history" ("Daily News" 8)

However, while Poland is careful about avoiding appropriating indigenous histories and on sticking to particular historical truths, she simultaneously subverts society's general understanding of history by formulating her own version of history. She does so by using fictionalisation to weave together a new, unique historical narrative. Poland utilises her subjectivity and does not shy away from the complexity of her emotional attachment to the characters and their setting which she grew up hearing stories about. With a mind that gravitates towards stories, but with training in academia, Poland is a prime candidate for writing historical fiction. She made a deliberate choice to write a work of historical fiction rather than a straightforward history as has been the case throughout her writing career, with the vast majority of her works falling within the historical fiction genre. *Recessional for Grace* (2003) was, Poland said, "to do with what it meant to write a book, what it was like finding places, what it was like creating characters and the research was part of that (Interview). Similarly, she stated that, "[T]he thing is that when you are writing a novel, you can observe in a different way from if you're writing history" (Interview).

Defining the archive itself is necessary to establish the concept of the author's archive and how it can be defined. The archival theory which accompanies the archive's definition provides a basic foundation from which a framework can emerge focussed solely on the intersection of author, archive and text. This thesis seeks to provide a consideration of the ways in which the archive can be problematised and applied to an empowered reading of South African historical fiction. Poland's *Shades* attempts to relanguage the history of the frontier which is in many ways unspeakable. The novel aims to teach us of an archival reading of South African history, and this thesis attempts to seek what kind of original archive we can bear upon in the context of South African texts. These texts, characterised by *Shades* in this case, require a focus on the historical frontier in their representation of South African - and Eastern Cape - history and the colonial issue. This thesis argues that the analysis of *Shades* as an individual text allows for the uncovering of

such an archive and that *Shades* is capable of being the central text in this thesis. Its strength as a piece of literature is evident in its broad acclaim - its more recent cover boasts over 90 000 copies sold. The book is still in print with copies still on the shelves of bookstores and was a school setwork for over a decade - therefore acquiring institutional accreditation. It is canonical in its own right, having commanded the attention of educators and bookstores across South Africa.

This thesis ultimately seeks to provide a consideration of the way in which the archive can be problematised and applied to an empowered reading of an historical fiction text through a close analysis of *Shades* and the archive it is connected to. It argues that the analysis of the link between archive and novel results in an in-depth analysis and excavation of the text itself. Poland's research-heavy writing shows a process of information collecting which reveals both her emphasis on the importance of detailed research but shows the prominence of the research itself. As Jeanette Eve states, "[*Shades*] is not [...] a biographical work, nor a history of the mission. St. Matthias is a reflection of St. Matthew's; four of the novel's characters are inspired by Poland's forebears; some events in the story are true to the period in which it is set; but the novelist gives place, character and story lives and truths of their own" (318). A comparative analysis of the archive with the creative work enables the searcher to see the value of an archive alongside its limitations, while demonstrating the value of the creative work and the merit of subjectivity within the creative process. This thesis's ultimate intention is to hypothesise an additional perspective within archival theory in how an author can utilise their own self-produced literary archive as a tool to produce a text.

Chapter 1: The Archive

"The archive is a means to explore the vital relation between the creative and the critical" (Eaton et al.).

Introduction

This thesis sets out to explore the use of the archive in a fictional context, assessing how Poland as a writer of fiction explores and harnesses the archive within her novel, *Shades*. It analyses the archive as a springboard to fictionalisation rather than focussing on archival theory and the complexity of the archive itself. Chapter 1 covers an abbreviated exploration of the problematic nature of the archive and the complexity of archival theory, avoiding tackling a comprehensive and holistic assessment so that the exploration remains relevant to the focus of this thesis. Defining the archive in its immensity is irrefutably a highly complex and difficult task and this thesis thus approaches the archive with a much simplified definition. This project defines the archive as a repository and collection of documents and historical records held in both public and private institutions, and consists of information in an array of formats - such as written, visual and digital - whose role is to ensure the longevity of human memory and whose inclusion in the archive is based on what value it brings. It holds a particularly important position in society due to its function as the keeper of history and knowledge - and ultimately has the power to dictate the major narratives of history. The archive is inherently subjective and highly problematic due to the process of selection and discarding the archive perpetually undergone by the archivist and authorities in power, as well as due to the authority the archive holds over societal memory. It is necessary at this point to clarify how the term 'archive' will be employed before the full complexity of discussing the archive begins. 'Archive' will from here on be split into two concepts in this chapter: **A**rchive will signify the formalised institution, while **a**rchive will indicate the general term.

The purpose of using archival theory in this thesis to examine a work of fiction is specifically due to how complicated the Archive really is. This thesis 'looks through' the Archive and the particular lens it provides so that it can approach *Shades* and Poland from an angle which differs to an exclusively literary analysis. The archive in this thesis is therefore not used to assess the historical usage of the Archive and not to unrealistically examine *Shades* as a history text.

Instead, the archive is employed to argue how Poland manipulated the Archive and her own archive in ways that suited her intentions - as well as her narrative - but how she stayed faithful to her personal view of that archive and the familial legacy it represents. Poland's entanglement with the Archive and the intention with which she took on the role of archivist therefore stand at the core of this thesis as it formulates a theoretical framework based on the relationship between Poland, Archive and *Shades*. However, Archives are not passive resources but rather active agents. Poland may have influence over her archive, but her archive undoubtedly has influence over her - especially considering the personal nature of her research material. The complexity of the Archive and how its influence complicates the analysis of Poland and *Shades* sets the basis of a need to investigate the connection between historical fiction and archive - which this thesis ultimately sets out to do.

The Origins of the Archive

"It is impossible to speak of Derrida" states Verne Harris, "without also speaking of the archive" (133). Harris continues: "In a sense all Derrida's work is about the archive. He converses with it, mines it, interrogates it, plays in it, extends it, creates it, imagines it and is imagined by it" (61). Jacques Derrida, with his extensive contribution to archival theory, is an important springboard to a discussion on the notion of 'the Archive'. Derrida states in his renowned *Archive Fever* (1995) that:

> [T]he meaning of 'archive', its only meaning, comes to it from the Greek *archeion*: initially a house, a domicile, an address, the residence of the superior magistrates, the *archons*, those who commanded. The citizens who thus held and signified political power were considered to possess the right to make or to represent the law (Derrida *Archive Fever* 9- 10).

Following Derrida's reasoning, the Archive has its origins within a space of authority and power, with those who rule over the Archive able to privilege certain accounts while discarding others. These judgments of course do not include the opinion of those who are outside the circle of power. This results in the powerful controlling the 'representation' and 'making' of the law – ultimately allowing a domination over records and socio-political commentary. Derrida's combining of 'archeion' and 'archons' to define the capricious thing that is the Archive also speaks to the importance of the location that has been chosen to house the Archive. Both the Archive's keepers

and the physical address of the Archive monitor the accessibility of the Archive when it comes to what material is allowed to enter and leave, and who is allowed to access the material it holds.

Derrida argues that the name 'archive' "apparently coordinates two principles in one: the principle according to nature or history, *there* where things *commence* – physical, historical, or ontological principle – but also the principle according to the law, *there* where men and gods *command, there* where authority, social order are exercised, *in this place* from which *order* is given – nomological principle" (Derrida *Archive Fever* 9). Intrinsic to history is the disjunction between the actual first-hand physical events of history versus the version of history dictated by those in command. The difference between the two histories is the primary explanation for what has been chosen to remain in the Archive. 'Fact', then, is murky and contested. What has been established as the 'truth' is the product of that which is nomological – and therefore that which has authority. There is a constant power struggle within the Archive because of the role as the maintainer of societal knowledge and history it has been entrusted with. After all, whoever holds the Archive holds the 'truth'. Interrogating the Archive as a researcher must always include questioning how and in what way the Archive is prioritising knowledge and disregarding certain accounts, and examined with an acknowledgement and emphasis of the falsities and contestations within society's recordkeeping.

Samuel Edquist argues in his essay "Archival Divides: Archives as Contested Realities and Metaphors" that "[t]he [archival] turn has been described as a move from seeing archives as *sources* to archives as *subjects and processes*, as well as increasingly regarding archives as symbols and metaphors" (Edquist 115). The move has therefore animated – or anthropomorphised even – the Archive to attempt to dissect how it functions and how it influences its environment. Similarly, Danielle Cooper defines the archival turn as "the transition from the archive as a source for research to the archive as the subject of research" (446). Consequently, "*the archive* today" according to Edquist, "has contradictory meanings in academia, where the more traditional hands-on conception of archives connected to professional archivists and archival science, is complemented with more metaphorical and/or philosophical ones" (115-116).

Edquist also maintains that the term 'Archive' has become highly ambiguous within societal, scholarly and theoretical spaces. The result, he argues, is how the definition of the archive now includes three meanings:

> [Firstly,] a delineated group of records created or received by a specific creator and kept together afterwards. A second, and older, meaning is a concrete place, a repository – a building or room – that contains archives in the first meaning. Thirdly, the archive can also denote organisations, such as the National Archives, which might hold several archives-as-repositories and thousands of archives-as-fonds (Edquist 103).

The multiple definitions of the archive complicate the identification of the Archive as both a metaphorical and palpable entity, the contrasting interpretations which have caused a rift within scholarly and theoretical work. Defining the Archive is therefore particularly difficult because of its constant evolution.

Converse to the general assumption, the Archive is not necessarily only an institution for memory, but also one with the purpose of forgetting. In a speech Derrida gave at a 1998 seminar at the University of the Witwatersrand, he stated: "[T]he archive – the good one – produces memory, but produces forgetting at the same time […] it eschews the forgetting associated with incompleteness, loss, selection and destruction" (Harris 137). He continues:

> When I handwrite something on a piece of paper, I put it in my pocket or in the safe, it's just in order to forget it, to know that I can find it again while in the meantime having forgotten it. If there is pure forgetting, it's because the archive, in order to be safe, in a safe, should be external to me. […] The archive, in other words, always works against itself. And what we call 'memory institutions' could just as easily be called houses of forgetting (Harris 138)

The archive therefore exists to help remember the past and to allow abandoning and forgetting. The archive is a place which shapes the future: history and the present can be deposited and returned to at a later stage when needed.

According to Derrida, "It is a question of the future, the question of the future itself, the question of a response, of a promise and of a responsibility for tomorrow. The archive: if we want to know what this will have meant, we will only know in the times to come" (Derrida 27). The expanding nature of the Archive allows for a continuous generation of new knowledge and the uncovering of new understandings; what is inscrutable now – or perhaps incomprehensible – may be knowable in years to come. While much is forgotten, much is also subsequently found and new interpretations and narratives created. "The archive" argues Ronald Suresh Roberts, "begins to seem more womb (site of unborn art, unpublished manuscripts, nascent ways of being embodied in print) than tomb. But the author, too, inhabits and implements variants of discursive discipline"

(Roberts 302). This thesis works with both the metaphorical and palpable Archive as it examines the capability of the Archive as a 'womb' rather than 'tomb'. In turn, there will be an in-depth examination of the theoretical plausibility and usefulness of an individualised Archive - made up of creative fiction, factuality and organisation - which is birthed from the broader Archive.

The Problematic Nature of the Archive

"Nothing" states Derrida, "is less reliable, nothing is less clear today than the word 'archive'…Nothing is thus more troubled and more troubling today than the concept archived in this word 'archive'" (Harris 65). While its role as an institution of knowledge and history is fraught with complexities and power dynamics, the archive is not only the physical representation, but – as Michel Foucault argues – rather "the law of what can be said, the system of statements, or rules of practice, that give shape to what can and cannot be said" (Hamilton et al. "Introduction" 9). As discussed above, the archive controls – and in turn is controlled – by power which therefore problematises the Archive's and archivist's role as record-keepers of history and social memory. It is the Archive which represents society's understanding of itself which informs the positionality of further generations It is alarming then that the Archive is intrinsically discriminatory. As Achilles Mbembe argues, "in the granting of a privileged status to certain written documents, and the refusal of that same status to others, thereby judged 'unarchivable'", communities and societies are judged as unnecessary for historical preservation in the archive (Mbembe 20).

The discriminatory, biased nature of humanity intercepts and distorts the archive in order to achieve control – resulting in an institution that privileges certain information and histories while discarding that which is found 'unsuitable'. What is truly problematic then is the fact Archives are built and monitored both by society and by individuals who will always have a personal agenda. "Archives […]" Schwartz and Cook argue, "are not some pristine storehouses of historical documentation that has piled up, but a reflection of a recurrent justification for the society that creates them" (25). Additionally, Archives provide proof of the existence of histories: as Mbembe argues in *Refiguring the Archive*, the Archive is "proof that a life truly existed, that something actually happened, an account of which can be put together" (21). The discarding of archival material, then, includes the danger of dismissing the existence of human lives and

societies due to the archive's role in the "everyday activity of identity formation and maintenance by ordinary people" (Hamilton et al. "Introduction"). Hamilton et al. continue their argument, stating how: "Archives are the product of a process which converts a certain number of documents into items judged to be worthy of preserving and keeping in a public place, where they can be consulted according to well-established procedures and regulations. The final destination of the archive is therefore always situated outside its own materiality, in the story that it makes possible" (20). Accordingly, inherent in the archival system is the balancing of the choice between what is deemed relevant and what is not, alongside the external forces driving a certain narrative. The archive is ultimately a social construct that is at its core a mechanism of social memory construction, reconstruction and calculated preservation. The content of the archive is determined not by the supposedly 'objective' material held within, but rather by those who have power over the archive. Accordingly, "The archive" writes Mbembe, "is, therefore, not a piece of data, but a status" (20).

As such, there will always be the subjective choice to include certain material that privileges a certain historical narrative because of the subjectivity of the archivist and of the power that presides over the Archive. There is a resulting complacency in ignoring historical narratives - such as pushing more marginal narratives and histories to the back. This intentional negligence also links to the belief that non-written – non-literate – historical materials have 'no place' in an archive that houses only the written word and what the West define as archival material These 'other' historical materials - such as oral traditions - form an intrinsic maintenance and restoration of social memory for various indigenous and marginalised cultures. It must be noted that "[a]n inquiry around archive(s) also demands an attempt to understand the conditions and circumstances of preservation [and exclusion] of material […] from the record, as well as attention to the relations of power underpinning such inclusions and exclusions" (Hamilton et al. "Introduction" 9). Ultimately, due to the complexities of subjective versus objective histories and archives, 'fact' in this thesis will be engaged with as a construct rather than an unconditional 'truth'.

While Schwartz and Cook argue that "[a]rchives as institutions and records as documents […] are passive resources to be exploited for various historical and cultural purposes", Archives can also serve a far less nefarious purpose (19). It is through the Archive that knowledge production can continue as it is from referring to the past that we are able to move forward - it is

forever changing, evolving, growing in some areas and reducing in others. While the Archive can be weaponised, it can also be used as a tool to reclaim histories which have been erased. Because the Archive is continuously "being added to and subtracted from, and is in dynamic relation with its physical environment", what is problematic now can be adapted and 'updated' (Schwartz and Cook 7). The holes in histories can be found and analysed by the choice that had been made to discard specific material. It should not be forgotten that Archives are also institutions of memory and identity, and without them the past would otherwise be inaccessible.

The South African Archive

The complexity of South Africa's racial and social histories is made obvious by its archives. As Beth Wyrill argues, "[M]any African archives are haunted by the work they performed in the service of colonial rule" (Wyrill "Guy Butler" 26). South Africa's complicated past is further highlighted when examining what remains from the precolonial, colonial and *apartheid* eras, and in turn when speculating and calculating what is absent. If the purpose of the Archive is to remember, South Africa faces the issue of an Archive inhabited by privileged accounts and narratives and vast gaps where other histories have been very intentionally removed. Its Archive has its roots in colonial history and an inherent racism and prejudice against the indigenous South African populace and their method of preserving history. South Africa continues to move forward with an archival system which has its origins in the Western definition of the Archive and which privileges the literate, written account above all other methods of history and social memory preservation. Accordingly, what we recognise as the South African Archive is an archetype produced by the West with structures, methods and definitions mostly ill-suited to recordkeeping outside of the theories and methodology of the West. Indigenous South African historical practices such as oral storytelling are given no place in a written archive, nor are the deeply culturally significant rock paintings created by the San people – the first inhabitants of South Africa. The question has consequently arisen in modern times of how to create space in the present-day Archive for sources and methods of archivisation that have been historically deemed unrecognisable by a Western society. The main concern is tackling the decolonisation and redefinition of South Africa's Archive when there has been a deliberate erasure of information and

historical material - particularly in the cases where the colonial doctrine and narratives were not factually supported.

Beth Wyrill's PhD thesis, titled "The Archival Turn: Rereading the Guy Butler Collection in the National English Literary Museum", focusses primarily on the recently retitled Amazwi South African Museum of Literature – previously known as the National English Literature Museum (NELM) – in Makhanda, Eastern Cape. Wyrill looks specifically at Amazwi's archive in her work, considering the impact of both Guy Butler as the museum's founder, as well as the impact of colonial whiteness on the Amazwi archive. While Wyrill's work will be explored in further detail later in this thesis, her argument on the erasure of historical narratives and the embedded discord within the archive is of particular relevance. She argues that, "The archive's collected components gesture always to those that remain uncollected, to the conscious and unconscious organising logics of archivists themselves, and even to the institutional practices dictating its boundaries" (Wyrill "Archival Turn" 18). Amazwi therefore becomes an appropriate example of this when the archive and its founder's intentions are revealed. Amazwi's archive has had a focus on only English literature for the majority of its lifespan, which betrays its current positionality. This exclusivity only broke four years ago, in 2020, when the South African government authorised the museum to broaden its literary, linguistic and cultural focus to incorporate a far more holistic collection and exhibition of South African literature.

Accordingly, it must be noted that despite its boast that is a proudly inclusive South African archival center, with an all-encompassing collection of South African literature of various varieties, it must not be forgotten that the museum was in fact initially intended to house only South African works written exclusively in English – as specified by its main founder, Guy Butler. According to Amazwi's official website, Butler – who was at that stage a professor of English at the nearby Rhodes University – founded the museum in the 1960s "with a small collection of South African manuscripts", with the idea of creating "a national repository for South African literary manuscripts" (Amazwi). The fact that Butler implied that South African literature was literature written in the English language should not go unnoticed.

While Amazwi originated several decades after South Africa achieved independence from its British colonisers, the remnants of colonialism arguably appear in its founder's fascination with

the British 1820 settlers and English literature within South Africa. Amazwi's foundations are connected therefore to its founder's interest in the colonial. Wyrill asserts that:

> [I]t cannot be denied that Butler considered the English language and English speakers to occupy a special and important role in the South African cultural milieu; he says as much in various lectures and published writings. NELM was thus instantiated under the energies of a very specific desire: to recognize a fairly colonially-coded understanding of the role of English in Africa (Wyrill "A Contested History" 30).

Butler was situated within the English language canon, both in literature and academia - being both poet and academic after he took the post of University Chair of English at Rhodes University in 1952 while concurrently producing poetry. In the present day, Butler's presence is even more embedded in Makhanda's landscape - from the 'Guy Butler' auditorium in the 1820 Settler Monument which looms over the city, to the Rhodes residence built in 2020 which was named in his honour.

There is an irony, therefore, when noting how highly Butler has been praised for his participation in the academic and creative fields despite the controversial positionality views and ideas on South African literature which later shrouded his work. Paul Maylam – an emeritus professor at Rhodes University – writes in his book on the history of Rhodes, *Rhodes University, 1904-2016: An Intellectual, Political and Cultural History*, that:

> [Guy Butler's] writings aroused controversy, particularly from the early 1970s when humanities scholars working in the liberal tradition, to which Butler belonged, came under attack from an emerging radical group of intellectuals informed, to a greater or lesser extent, by Marxist thought. They coined the term 'Butlerism' to denote what they saw as 'a colonial mindset masquerading as liberal humanism'. Butler's celebration of the British 1820 settlers, it was argued, failed to take into account the racial oppression and exploitation that was characteristic of British colonialism. His particular interest was in the white English-speaking minority in the country, and he strove to promote the writing and study of South African English literature. Some criticised him for steadfastly maintaining the English canon and for neglecting black literature (Maylam 118).

However, there is a peculiarity in how, as Wyrill claims, "One of [Guy] Butler's central poetic anxieties is that the English language of the settlers may be unequal to the task of understanding or uncovering the truth of an African land" (Wyrill "The Archival Turn" 28). It seems incongruous then that a poet and academic who focussed on the South African identity and landscape deemed

the English language incapable of truly embodying the topic Butler was so taken with. It is even more paradoxical that Butler founded a literature museum of solely South African literature written in the English language to showcase English Literature's prowess. While the next chapter will focus more on the information found in the museum's archives, the origins of Amazwi and its evolution as an institution stand as a good example of the complex nature of the South African archive, particularly with its movement away from its initial focus on English - the colonial literature and its concomitant culture - to a more culturally-inclusive literary museum which acknowledges the country's linguistic diversity.

Amazwi's name has changed various times over the years, beginning with its original name in 1972, the Thomas Pringle Collection for English in Africa. It was altered in 1974 to the National Documentation Centre for English, and again in 1980 to the National English Language Museum (Maylam 119). It was given its current name in 2019 after the museum underwent a dramatic shift in the institution's focus area: NELM became the Amazwi South African Museum of Literature. The museum – already a declared Cultural Institution – took on the role of a principal site of unabridged South African literary heritage, rather than solely focussing on texts written in English. The choice to name the institution "Amazwi" - which suitably means "words" in isiXhosa - is an obvious announcement of the shift in positionality. The deliberate naming of Amazwi and choice to use an indigenous language accompany the shift in the museum's subject material. According to Amazwi's website, "The museum now has a mandate to collect literary artefacts relating to the literatures of all South African languages" – including multimedia such as tape recordings of interviews, manuscripts, newspaper cuttings, articles, papers, theses, etc. (Amazwi). The general decolonial nomenclature currently occurring across South Africa presents itself not only in the example of Amazwi, but also the neighbouring Rhodes University whose name has been a contentious point for years as well as the name of the town itself that both institutions are based within - Grahamstown became Makhanda only a year before Amazwi's renaming.

However, there is a weird sense of incongruity around the museum despite its revampment into a promised place of cultural and literary inclusivity - backed by governmental assurances of its importance. Amazwi prides itself on its "5-star rating from the Green Building Council of South Africa [and the] first museum in the country to achieve this" - with a budget of around R140 million (Amazwi). The move to renewable energy is of course essential to the future of South

Africa, but the amount of effort and money spent on Amazwi's reformation is contradicted by Amazwi's infrequent visitors and limited performances and events. Amazwi still maintains connections to Rhodes University – which is situated less than 300 meters away – but is no longer technically part of the university as it once was when its founder was alive. Accordingly, though Makhanda's rapidly disintegrating infrastructure has sunk the city from quaint to dishevelled – and Rhodes University grapples with its usual financial predicaments – Amazwi should in its independence be a hub of research and activity for both the university and the town itself. Instead, other than the museum's student discounts for archive access for Rhodes students and the occasional functions where the Rhodes jazz band performs, very few students make the short trek up the hill from the Rhodes campus to the museum. A rich source thus remains unexploited from those who should engage with it the most. Ultimately, it is unclear whether it is the practicalities of marketing and public awareness of the institution, simply a lack of interest, or if it is the residue of the museum's past which lessens interest.

Because of the South African Archive's disproportionate influence when it comes to colonial versus indigenous material, it has ensured that the legacy of a small, white South African population remains to a degree far greater than the indigenous social memories and histories of a much larger population. Peterson argues that "[u]nderlying the archive is the aim of ordering the past as inheritance. As we know, colonial and *apartheid* authorities consistently denied the existence of any legacy among Africans worth preserving, an attitude borne out in their insistence that Africans had no history" (29). The pointed lack of recognition was therefore an attempt to remove the indigenous population's identity, and ultimately their humanity. Local knowledge, histories and indigenous methods of 'archiving' were cast aside, both because colonial powers did not, and would not, recognise methods of archivisation that were outside of literate knowledge preservation. Accordingly, "Some scholars in South Africa, as well as a number of political figures, have argued that many of these [historical] books and documents are too tainted by colonialism to be usable as sources of historical evidence" (Kros et al. 7). There is the complication, however, of the short-sightedness of discarding material that provides a primary recounting of life during the colonial era – both the colonial depiction of the British occupation and indigenous South African lives – despite the biased and unreliable nature of the material.

The British produced an extensive collection of information of their arrival and settling within South Africa, their interactions with indigenous South Africans and depictions of the landscape. It is this collection of observations and experiences which led to the establishment and subsequent sustaining of a particular rhetoric of the indigenous peoples, and it was through this precise and selective recording that colonisation was perpetrated (Wyrill "A Contested History" 26). The movement of white colonials towards depicting indigenous South Africans in a particular light was the start of what would become a prolonged attempt to remove black identity, and therefore the attempt to erase the population's history and validity of methods of social memory preservation. The removal of cultural, social, familial and individual identity was an oppressive tool that was implemented through the written word and subsequently the archive, which the Western world relied on as a factual database. It is a question of power and historical dynamics when assessing the trustworthiness of information. Due to colonial manipulation, the literate archive took precedence over oral tradition and indigenous memory practices, which were resolutely claimed as incompatible with the Western versions of knowledge production and archivisation. The inequality in determining the trustworthiness of archival methods, whether they take the traditional written word form or not, continues to be fraught with inequality due to the main narratives in history and in the archive that have been pushed forward and emphasised – subsequently pushing out other narratives that did not fit or support them. Ultimately, as editors Cynthia Kros, et al. argue in *Archives of Times Past: Conversations about South Africa's Deep History*, the gaps in precolonial South African history are not an exception in archival discourse – the "[r]ecords of the past in all societies are always incomplete" (4).

The incomplete nature of South African archives is exacerbated because of the colonial obsession with control via the destruction of indigenous identities. The fragility of identity within South Africa because of an unstable archive has left an opening that has resulted, as Kros et al. argue, in "politicians […] increasingly appealing to people's ideas about their traditions to win legitimacy and public support. Traditional leaders, as they are officially called, constantly use references to history before the colonial period in attempts to strengthen their claims to positions of authority" (Kros et al. 9). The power struggle that has been produced by the unsteadiness of the archive primarily due to the absence of untainted indigenous history therefore calls for some type of reform – ultimately a focus on the recovery of what has been forgotten and a dissection of what remains.

Unsurprisingly there is an ongoing debate when it comes to the authenticity of this recovery and of the historical material it would produce. This argument includes, firstly, a belief in supporting a historical rehabilitation that is hybridised versus, secondly, an attempt to solidify an undiluted version. Barnabas et al. argue, however, that

> Granting that no approach to indigenous identity can in effect reverse the many years of colonialism experienced by indigenous people, it is in moving beyond the symmetry of indigenous set against non-indigenous that we are acknowledging that we now live in a thoroughly hybridized world where boundaries have become utterly porous, even though they are artificially maintained (98).

The question, therefore, is what constitutes an authentic identity and how exactly it can be authenticated. South Africa has a history of indigenous identities – including those from outside South Africa who were brought in as slaves, or 'indentured labourers' – being purposefully sabotaged and disfigured first by colonial forces and continued by *apartheid*. Renowned author Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, as Barnabas et al. state, "believes that colonialism's greatest tool of oppression was the devaluing of the culture of the colonised" (91). Accordingly, the idea of a full reestablishment of a pre-colonial identity and culture is thwarted largely by the loss of documentation, traditional archives, and oral accounts that have been distorted by trauma, the effects of time and by deliberate disfigurement. This is not to say that the reestablishment and recovering of the pre-colonial leading into colonial identity and culture is wholly unattainable. It must be approached, however, with the practical mindset of recognising the loss of essential source material and general historical record due to colonial sabotage.

An interesting case is that of the National Museum of Ghana which has recently undergone major renovations. Jon Olav Hove's article in *The Conversation* discusses the complications within the newly renovated National Museum of Ghana – established in 1957 in Accra – and its relationship with the inclusion and exclusion of the trauma of its colonial past. The idea of a national museum within a colonial inhabited West Africa began within an elitist, Western mindset – it was hoped that "[t]he museum would […] serve as a global space: a meeting place for Europeans as well as Africans with the necessary Western education to understand the exhibitions" (Hove 450). While the museum did begin with this attitude, it had to quickly adapt with the increasing anti-colonial mindset that emerged at the time – led particularly by Kwame Nkrumah – and is now very much an Afrocentric space. The museum, according to Hove, originally targeted an international market – ultimately leaving out "less peaceful histories" which included the "slave

trade and the destructive aspects of colonial rule" (Hove). The title of the article, "Ghana's National Museum: superb restoration but painful stories remain untold", speaks to the exclusion of that for which the institution aims to forget or discard. Hove says that when visiting the newly renovated museum, he "concluded that it does an exemplary job of presenting the dynamic diversity of Ghana as a nation. But it still excludes certain histories – most notably those of the slave trade and colonial rule. The museum is leaving out crucial aspects of Ghana's past. It misses the opportunity to be a space where these can be discussed and processed peacefully" (Hove). The debate on the inclusion or exclusion of the trauma of the past is not the purpose of this thesis; rather, this example shows the question that remains of what choices we have to make to rediscover and consequently repurpose the past, present and future.

In response to the missing histories of South Africa, techniques of identification of the past within the country have subsequently started to evolve in order to research that which has been hidden by the dominant narratives of colonialism. Kros et al. state also that the general perception of the archive "refers specifically to materials that people imagine as belonging together as sources of historical evidence", and the importance imbued onto the archive is due to what is perceived as a "valuable past" (4, 5). Accordingly, the question of what is deemed important and valuable within the South African archive is a contested area, particularly because of the archive's ability to cement what is remembered and what is deemed fundamental. With regards to the material that was either buried or discarded within the South African archive, it was only in the later 1900s that there began a scholarly movement to "recover what they could of these traces" (Kros et al. 5). This was largely due to the increasing pressure against the *apartheid* system and government, and the increase of interest in South African history without the influence of colonisation. Wyrill quotes Carolyn Hamilton's statement at the 2006 South African History Archive conference in which she states that:

> In the 1980s the recovery of memory was a key act of resistance. In the 1900s memory was formally recognized as part of the archive through policy and legislation in the area of heritage. In the now, we may wish to reconsider what 'memory' might mean, and what its powers might be in a context where so much that was once consigned out of the archive as 'mere memory' is now entrenched and secure, in the archive. Which memories are still excluded and why? Might the term 'memory' now come to refer to a past that eludes archival fixing but that requires narration? (Wyrill "The Archival Turn" 34).

Similarly, there has been a rise of feminist notions and strategies of "'recovering' women that have previously been marginalized within the pre-existing archival record and adding women to institutional archival collections" (Cooper 445).

The reconstruction and reproduction of history to include the narratives and stories of marginalised groups was – and still is – a means of archival restoration. Some of "the first people to show an interest in writing about the past" argue Kros et al., "were black people educated at mission schools in the Cape Colony" (11). Writing was a means of resistance and of seeking identity outside of the specially constructed identity given to black mission trained South Africans by colonialism and their white educators – ultimately utilising their colonial mission education for their own purposes outside the realm of European colonialism. These mission educated students – the beginnings of black literate intellectualism in South Africa – wrote both in English and in their own indigenous languages. The use of indigenous language was in itself a form of resistance while simultaneously the use of English was a means of 'talking back' at the oppressor. In the early 1900s, the writing of African histories focussed on the use of oral traditions as dominant sources. Writers also looked to family heritage and cultural traditions. While clear, Afrocentric narratives emerged, the outcomes were varied – proving not only how history is remembered differently, but how no two histories are the same.

A major discussion in Shanade Barnabas and Samukelisiwe Miya's paper, "KhoeSan Identity and Language in South Africa: Articulations of Reclamation", is the formation, preservation and rediscovery of cultural identities. Using Stuart Hall's argument, they state that:

> Hall provides two conceptions of the way in which groups form their cultural identities. The first, he notes, played a role in postcolonial struggles and is used even today in the identity politics of marginalised peoples. It includes an underlying oneness, a true self that people with a shared history and ancestry have in common. This unchanged and unchanging self lies beneath artificially imposed selves and superficial divisions (Barnabas et al. 90).

Hall's second point is that "cultural identity is not fixed in an essentialised past, but rather 'subject to the continuous 'play' of history, culture and power'" (Barnabas et al. 90). Hall emphasises the liminality and fluidity of identity construction and preservation, while highlighting the major influence of external factors - such as the socio-politics of society - upon these identities – many of which remain in positions of fragility in their resuscitation and subsequent fledgling states.

Barnabas et al. continue arguing that "Stuart Hall likens the rediscovery of cultural identity to Franz Fanon's notion of the discovery of 'some very beautiful and splendid era whose existence rehabilitates us both in regard to ourselves and in regard to others'" (98). However, Hall's statement does hint at either – or both – a degree of hagiography that is created when assessing a precolonial South Africa, versus a manipulation and misinterpretation of the material lost and found. After all, as Barnabas and Miya state, "Many accounts of culture and identity, community, tradition and orality have been lost in a wash of bloody wars, genocide and assimilation for the sake of survival" (98). It is ultimately undeniable that South Africa's history is "one of unreliable historic documentation, or in some cases, no documentation at all" (Barnabas et al. 98). Accordingly, and bearing in mind that cultural identity as a concept is already flawed in itself due to its reliance on the Archive, South African cultural identities are complicated even further by remembrance and forgetting prompted by the powers that held sway over the Archive. It is also very important to note the point that the destruction inflicted in the past can never be reversed or undone, and to attempt to recreate it would be ironically to obscure this very destruction.

Archives, Historical Fiction and Marguerite Poland

A broad search of the online archives available through the University of Cape Town – which includes extensive access to external journals and books – reveals that there seems less information on the relationship between the South African Archive and historical fiction than one would assume. The most common discussions about and around the Archive and South African historical fiction are very specific. These include the examination of specific titles and authors, as well as specific geographical areas, rather than a deliberate investigation of the relationships between archive, author and the historical fiction genre. This thesis focuses solely on Marguerite Poland's novel, *Shades*, which is set at the turn of the nineteenth century on a mission farm in the Keiskamma Valley. Poland started gaining recognition after her children's book, *The Mantis and the Moon*, was published in 1979 and for which she was awarded the Fitzpatrick Literary Award for Children's Literature. She subsequently made a name for herself for her historical fiction work which all centers around the colonial history of the Eastern Cape region. Her novels - such as *A Sin of Omission* (2019), *Iron Love* (1999) - characteristically feature an exploration of mission station history and the socio-political backdrop of 19th century South Africa. *Shades*, published in

1993 by Penguin Books in South Africa, focusses on the inhabitants of the mission station she titles St. Matthias, which is based on the still-standing mission station named St Matthew's that is situated in the Keiskamma region of the Eastern Cape, South Africa. Most of the main characters of the novel are based on her own relatives who lived at St Matthew's during the period in which the novel is set – in the novel's case, about 1896-1899.

Due to the novel's reliance on her familial archive, Poland gathered material, narratives and 'facts' from what sources of her family's history remained, while drawing both on the historical narratives found in history texts and historical sources found in archives, such as Rhodes University's Cory Library. Poland spent about six years researching and writing her novel, sorting through what she felt should be included versus excluded. While the storyline she created mostly follows the lives of her ancestors, it is clear that Poland made a concerted effort to stay 'true' to the Eastern Cape's history. Her faithfulness to an authentic retelling of history ultimately helps to strengthen the genuineness of the novel's setting. Poland's choice of the historical fiction genre gave her room to integrate fact and fiction and therefore explore her ancestral history in a historical setting which mimics reality; fact and fiction in *Shades* blend to form a new narrative unique to her adaptation of history. Poland sought out and collected material on her ancestors who lived at the St. Matthew's mission station which became part of an archive of information designed to help interrogate her familial history and the legacy left behind. The historical fiction genre's reliance on the Archive provided a chance to explore the identity left behind by her ancestors through a historical lens that is both personal and generalised.

Poland's research into her ancestry and the regions her ancestors inhabited reveals the complexities of South Africa's history and what it means to look back into colonial history with a postcolonial gaze. In delving into her personal history, Poland has been faced with the complicated and problematic history of ancestors who were implicit in the British colonisation of the Eastern Cape – specifically through religion. Additionally, there is the issue of Poland's great-uncle, who takes the name 'Victor' in the book, who was one of the major draftsmen of the migrant labour system – the repercussions of which still impact present day South Africa. In an interview conducted for the purpose of this project, Poland states how in the context of being "white, middle class", "I had to be incredibly careful because I am very aware that apprehending other people's history is […] a hugely sensitive subject and, and one that I have never been cavalier about, I hope"

(Poland interview). However, and unsurprisingly, there remains a sense of idealised nostalgia within *Shades*, particularly with regards to the novel's characters and setting. This is apparent mainly in the combination of the archive-cemented narratives and the romanticisation that occurs within the fictionalisation of 'fact' which is utilised to fit historical factuality into the narrative being created. Much like how Wyrill argues that "the trauma of an apartheid past is rendered viscerally present", Poland brings the murkiness and glanced over realities of the South African colonial experience to the surface, while exhibiting to the contemporary world a history that has not been exposed before (Wyrill "The Archival Turn" 34).

Samuel Edquist argues that in general, despite the tight link between identity and the archive, the construction of archives for the purpose of identity and heritage is not as common as one would think. He explains it within the context of "community archives", "marginalized groups" and "ethnic minorities", who "collect records as a way of keeping control of what is perceived as their own history" (Edquist 107). While Poland is a sole, independent 'curator' of a very specialised, personal archive, it is a similar concept of a purposeful construction of a family identity. Poland's researching and writing of *Shades* was therefore a method of identity deconstruction at first and the subsequent construction through the medium of South African historical fiction. Beth Wyrill notes in her PhD that, "Derrida identifies the primordial desire that informs the archival impulse as the search for irrecoverable origins" (Wyrill "Archival Turn" 19).

The archive Poland produced for *Shades* is ultimately defined and guided by its subjectivity, alongside the historical evidence she could find when she conducted her research on both her ancestral and general South African histories. This thesis works on the argument that retracing the author's research and process of creating an 'archive' – in this case Poland's – will lead to an insight and grasp of the text through the rationale of the novelist themself – even if the author was unaware of their research having the characteristics of an archive.

Mentioning Joyce at this stage is important as his work was the starting point for this thesis and its ideas of analysing the archive and forming the idea of an 'author's archive' from which connections can be made between the archival, fictional and the non-fictional. In Joyce's case, it is far more suitable to name his vast collection of information that informs his text a 'database' rather than an archive due to its very distinct, almost scientific structure of research. In Poland's case, there is a softer, more obscure approach to the organisation of material; there is less structure

and a greater focus on historical accuracies, the providing of evidence, as well as directions and guidance for the production of a semi-fictional narrative that is supported by the factuality evident in the historical Archive. As such, the "encyclopedic realism" that Hugh Kenner describes Joyce's type of external structuring and information sorting in his text, *Ulysses: Revised Edition*, presented itself as a stepping stone towards identifying, defining and establishing the argument on Poland's production of a personal archive that influences the text she created.

In addition to a mentioning of Joyce is an interesting case study on the sizable archive on Nobel Laureate J.M. Coetzee, which was compiled by researchers and a vast amount by Coetzee himself. While Coetzee as an author does interact at times with the South African Archive – particularly in his first novel, *Dusklands* – it is the archive that has been established on the author himself that is of particular interest. The Coetzee archive is extensive and includes material such as the author's private notes to primary material to analyses of his novels, with the biggest archive of his work and his own personal archive held at the Harry Ransom Centre humanities library at the University of Texas. Coetzee himself is an alumnus of the University of Texas, with his connection to the university spanning several decades. The depth of the archive on Coetzee and the intimate quality of the material available to researchers – of the inner workings and mechanisms of his novel creation and his personal literary journey – allow an intricate understanding of the author and his production of works that have earned him a Nobel Prize in Literature and two Booker Prizes. In writing his biography, *J.M. Coetzee: A Life in Writing*, J.C Kannemeyer was given "unprecedented access to Coetzee's archive: private papers, manuscripts, personal and business letters, emails, photographs, collections of press cuttings and reviews, and a substantial volume of unpublished material, including juvenilia" (Eaton et al. "Introduction" 3). Kannemeyer's research also included rare interviews with Coetzee – who is known to be protective of his privacy and agreeing to very limited interviews. The access Kannemeyer was given to Coetzee's archive – alongside the University of Texas's procured vast collection of Coetzee material – has provided the world with an understanding of the specifics of Coetzee's work and process that even Coetzee's autobiographical-inspired novels – *Summertime*, *Boyhood* and *Youth* – cannot provide.

This case study is an example of how an archive that has been constructed on an author was used to understand both the author and their writing. Kai Easton, Marc Farrant, and Hermann

Wittenberg write in the introduction of *J.M. Coetzee and the Archive: Fiction, Theory, and Autobiography*: "Not only do these [Coetzee] archival collections help to illuminate Coetzee's authorship, but the specificity of the Coetzee archive itself raises wider questions […] about research and methodology: how do critics, historians, artists and readers approach and utilize manuscript materials, artefacts, photographs and multimedia sources?" (Eaton et al. 3). Eaton et al.'s quote which is used as the epigraph for this chapter emphasises the crucial link between the creative and the critical which is made possible by the archive.

What must be acknowledged during the analysis of the archive is the risk – which Andrew Dean argues – that the analysis itself will fall into the trap of "mov[ing] critics away from richly speculative responses to powerful writing" (Eaton et al. 6). This in turn, Dean continues, may "draw scholars instead into a labyrinth of authorial motivation and biographical resonance. There may be certain intellectual satisfactions with such endeavours, but they ultimately do not respond to what has motivated the scholarship in the first place" (Eaton et al. 6). Dean makes the pointed remark that this distraction will, firstly, undoubtedly take place, and secondly, seems to imply that side-tracking from staying strictly to the intention behind the research is only negative. However, dealing with the Archive and its complexities, side-tracking, going on tangents and general engrossment are inevitable, and these side quests should instead surely be seen as a positive rather than negative. Just like how the author builds an archive of their own, as this thesis argues, so does the researcher when compiling information on the text and its author. There is always a link that leads to the next, a book that leads on to another and a source which opens up a variety of avenues. Suitably, within the research stage of this project, there has been a tendency to be drawn away from the primary material into the depths of the archive – including all that encompasses the text and subject material. While such digressions are undeniably time consuming, the sense of 'truthfulness' that emerges after many hours of research and the backing that supports an idea and argument so much more effectively. It makes sense, then, that the usefulness of the excursions researchers take which aid in the compilation of secondary material and evidence is not unlike that of a historical fiction author first wading through the historical archive in order to create a cache of information from which to support a narrative.

Conclusion

The importance of going into such detail on the Archive is chiefly to understand its characteristics, its systems and the reason why it is seen as so problematic. In doing so, one can move to a consideration of the South African Archive and be able to see the traits of the Archive which can be used to dissect the institution in the context of South African socio-politics and in what individualised ways the South African Archive is problematic. Archival theory and a basic understanding of the Archive become further relevant when grappling with the concept of the relationship between author, archive and text because they deal with the Archive directly and therefore fall under the classification of archival theory.

The narrative of colonial archives is indisputably prejudiced and to a great degree untrustworthy in its accurate portrayal of a holistic history. Its influence in the Archive continues to linger because of the Archive's cyclical nature where material is forever going around a cycle of use, and attempts to extinguish this colonial influence appear an impossible task considering the already limited material that remains from that period in South Africa's history. Looking into the Archive with a postcolonial, self-aware stance, however, provides an opportunity to explore new options on how to restore lost memories and identities. Poland has done something very similar in creating her archive and using it to inform her writing of *Shades*. After collecting her material on her ancestors and South African history, she selected specific facts from her sources on her ancestors to place into her narrative in order to create her text, while using certain factually accurate historical landmarks to reinforce the novel's realism. Poland utilised fiction to carefully blend her chosen facts into a storyline of drama and romance. While she subverted her ancestors' histories, she at the same time created a narrative which filled the gaps in a history which would have continued to stand empty due to the lack of necessary information.

Chapter 2: Poland's Archive

"So a family myth – of distinction, of service, of heroism – was destroyed. That little valley that I first saw on that shining day, not only represented the labours of a missionary past but the seeds of an awesome and unhappy legacy" (Poland "Between me and My Shades" 4)

Introduction

"[W]e laymen," states Sigmund Freud in *Arts and Literature*, "have always been intensely curious to know […] from what sources that strange being, the creative writer, draws his material, and how he manages to make such an impression on us with it, and around in us emotions of which, perhaps, we had not even thought ourselves capable" (Freud 131). As readers, we have an underlying fascination with the hidden mechanisms in creating a novel and of the novelist's creative methods. Marguerite Poland took nearly six years to research and write *Shades*, taking extra time as a result of her careful attitude toward thoroughly and accurately researching the socio-political histories of South Africa and the Eastern Cape, which are pivotal to the themes and character development in the novel. *Shades* balances the nonfictional and fictional, and the creative and factual, taking on the challenging logistics of melding historical and socio-political fact with a fictional narrative arc. Situated within a non-fictional setting, *Shades* oscillates between working with factually established material, weaving pre-existing archival matter with the creative, and spinning a narrative which is based on fact but given body by fiction. Poland treats the factual-based material within her novel with a careful tenderness – particularly her family history and the complicated, emotional breaking of family myths. This is particularly true of the details around her great-uncle, Harry Taberer, whom she has repeatedly labelled in interviews and speeches as "the architect of the migrant labour system".

I had to explore the events, issues and ideologies which shaped this country and that watershed in its history; the plethora of legislation which disempowered black people; the debates on the role of missionaries; the South African War and rinderpest pandemic and, most important, the establishment of the migrant labour system which changed the shape of black South African society so tragically and irrevocably ("Meet the Author" 18)

Chapter 2 examines the readers' and researcher's engagement with the archive constructed by the author, while interrogating what impact the 'author's archive' has had on the work produced within this thesis. It outlines the reconstruction of Poland's archive - such as what material she selected and the role it played - and assesses what sources were chosen by this thesis to inform its analysis and for what reason, by interrogating the archive that has formed as a result of the research and analysis of Poland and *Shades*. The similarities between the author and the researcher and their research processes which result in the construction of an archive is therefore examined in greater detail. Chapter 2 explores the author's archive concept by giving close attention to both Poland's archive and the archive created through this thesis.

The Impact of the Archive

While there has been a focus thus far on how the author and researcher engage with the concept of an author's archive, little attention has been given to how the reader too is influenced. The archive arguably impacts on the reader even before they have opened the book. An interesting cover is designed to attract attention, the reviews on the front of the book provide an assurance of the quality of the novel and the blurb at the back provides what the advertiser thinks the audience most wants to see. These three elements are commercial book-selling strategies meant specifically to draw in readers. Accordingly, the artfully eye-catching cover and exuberant praise from famous authors are really a distraction from the aggressiveness of the printing company's marketing strategies. As a result of the capitalistic impulse to sell and deliver a product to the consumer, there is already information that is being subconsciously collected by the reader which influences the understanding and consumption of the text. Included in this is the author's biography that often appears on the book jacket at the end, or in the last few pages of the novel. Those who do read these short biographies have access to even further information to contextualise the novel, though this is dependent on whether the reader deems it necessary or not to read this extra information.

There is a subliminal quality to the marketed spectacle of a book's exterior, all set on influencing the mindset of the reader so as to persuade them to pick that book rather than any of the others sitting on the shelf next to it. The information that has been chosen for its ability to draw and retain the reader's attention thus influences how the reader first engages with the text and informs their reading from then on. Arguably, this small 'archive' that has been subliminally thrust

upon the reader leads to a more nuanced reading of the text. For example, the reader's first introduction to the text is through its front cover as they pick up the book, which will leave an unconscious imprint on the reader's mind throughout the duration of their reading. The cover of Poland's various editions of *Shades* has displayed different combinations of characters as the years have passed[2]. However, the progression from cover to cover provides a very interesting, micro example of the evolution of societal ideologies and politics within South Africa. The cover changes portray what the publisher believes the readers will want to see, particularly in the present day when *Shades* has become a more aged text within the rapidly expanding canon of postcolonial literature. The novel has had three different versions of its cover in the twenty-five years that it has been in print. The 1993 original edition, published by Viking, has a front cover that depicts the love triangle between Frances, Victor and Walter – whose dynamics, relationships and actions form the basis of the novel's overall narrative. The Penguin Group (SA) (Pty)'s 1994 reprint displays only Frances, with the St. Matthew's mission station and the valley it is nestled in visible in the background. The third and most recent cover, published in 2012 by Penguin, depicts Benedict – the most dominant black character among a cast of mainly white main characters.

The change in cover artwork echoes South Africa's history: the novel was published in 1993, a tumultuous year which preceded South Africa's legal break with the oppression of *apartheid* control with the ANC's ascension to power in 1994. The contrasting covers of the editions of 1994 and 2012 reflect the shift in South Africa's social climate and national identity. At face value the three different covers may be construed as a publisher's attempt to snatch at potential buyers' interests, yet it also displays three different angles from which *Shades* can be read while giving insight into how societal trends and social expectations have altered during a timeline of over two decades. In the end, by laying the three different covers side by side there is already a whole background of information and history hinted at without needing to turn a page. There are definite similarities between the reader picking up small amounts of information from the outside of the book which impacts, to a slight degree, their reading of the text, and how an archive of information of any size informs both researcher and author when they engage with the novel. The section below shows movement from the broader debate that has so far occurred on the author's archive concept to a more refined analysis of the researcher and author's archives.

[2] Pictures of the covers can be found in Appendix 2.

There is a similarity between the way the historical fiction author collects and creates an archive of factual and fictional information and how the researcher gathers research material in order to analyse a text. In both instances, the accumulation of data is two forms of research processes, albeit for different outcomes. While academic analysis seeks to dismantle and analyse the inner workings of a text, the historical fiction author intends to tell a story which is given greater dimensionality with the usage of history. However, both aim to produce written content and both utilise the information stored within that original research to bolster their work – which is in itself an act of knowledge production. While the work of the researcher is deemed factual and the author's work fictional, both produce writing that adds to the archive – whether it be analytical or literary. As contributors to the corpus of the written word with their new creations, the author and researcher add not only to their own archives but to the Archive. The historical fiction author and the researcher reflect the Archive's nature of self-generation and self-production because of their reliance on past material. As Daniel Dennett argues, "A scholar is just a library's way of making another library", which summarises the very essence of this argument (20). The author/researcher thus becomes an archivist in their own right who governs over their small, personalised archive which adds ultimately to the far larger institution, the Archive.

Notably, the archivist "cannot stand outside of the archive. Derrida points out that, in conducting archival research, the scholar automatically adds to the corpus of information available within the archive" (Wyrill "The Archival Turn" 32). In terms of knowledge production, the author/researcher is, as a concept, an archive – an amalgamation of archive and archivist – because of their role in both storing and producing material. It should be noted that the author/researcher and the archival research produced are not one and the same, but rather two separate entities that are tied together through their shared subjectiveness, as it is with the Archive. The subjectivity that accompanies human interference with the Archive is exacerbated by the relationship the author/researcher has with their creations, enfolding the author/researcher even further into their own archive and making it even more difficult for an outside party to view the author/researcher figure independently from their writing. Of course, it is from the very human element which subjectivity brings that new, unique material can be produced.

The assumption that the Archive has objective factuality adds a sense of credibility and reliability to the work it holds, and therefore to the new material that is constantly being added.

The problem, therefore, is in what way the new knowledge that is joining the corpus will be influenced by the very same Archive that the author faithfully turned to in search of information for the development of their own archive and subsequent writing. Inner and outer forces are constantly manipulating the Archive, whether it be archivists, events outside the Archive, those who reign over the Archive or what knowledge is being produced in tertiary education institutions. The new material that is being produced will therefore also be granted the required level of credibility once it has been placed in the shelves of the ever-evolving Archive. Thus, the micro-level archives made by the author/researcher are given a status simply because of their link to the documents being presented to the Archive.

To analyse Poland's archive, there must first be a quick diversion into a discussion about South Africa's Archive, specifically in relation to what has been discussed about the Archive and the direction this argument has taken. This is necessary due to *Shades's* attachment to South Africa's historical Archive and particularly the Eastern Cape history that it holds. The highly contested and complex space of the South African Archive has been complicated further by the response of postcolonial intervention to the dominating presence of colonial archival matter. Included in this is a debate on how to decolonise and refashion an archive which in reality is already suspect because of the role it played in reinforcing narratives of discrimination and excluding indigenous - often oral - narratives. The decolonial adaptation of Amazwi South African Museum of Literature is a testament to the messy nature of the transition the South African archive continues to undergo. An 'English Literature Museum for 45 years (1972-2019) and a culturally inclusive institution for 5, Amazwi is a case study on changing the narratives of an exclusionary space to suit the rhetoric of a changing South Africa and the challenges such an undertaking includes.

A Researcher's Archive

A unique archive has been produced from the research covered by this project which is situated wholly within the depths of the South African archive – and therefore the complexity of that archive's origins and subsequent development. This thesis's archive was customised according to the specific arguments being made and how such material would provide evidence and support. Its archive has relied extensively on the Amazwi archives and later on the interview that was conducted with Poland and. has therefore been predominantly influenced by those two sources and their individual inner complexities. This archive was created with the intention to expand specifically on the concept of an author's archive through interrogating *Shades*, its author and the research processes of both author and researcher. The parallel was at first unintentional, but when the characteristics of an archive became clearer the concept was deliberately developed further and used to elucidate the argument around Poland's creation and utilisation of her own archive. The archive on which this thesis's argument is dependent shows the authenticity of an 'author's archive' due to the process of selecting very specific material with a very specific intention. It has simultaneously shown how the common academic research practices are part of the archive building process. The result has been a demonstration of the process through which an archive is developed for the purpose of informing a text through research gathered for that particular purpose. The academic thesis-writing process has ultimately mimicked that of an author creating their own archive and text.

This project has produced an archive that consists of a combination of material on Poland, *Shades* and the archive that has not yet appeared together as one because of the specific choices made. It therefore possesses a fair degree of individuality despite simultaneously using the techniques that are fundamental to recognised academic knowledge production. Interestingly, the academic essay writing process and this thesis's creation of an archive have ended up providing new material for the South African archive in both the historical and literary categories. Wyrill, who is currently a research curator at Amazwi, writes in her PhD thesis that, "[A]ll archives are both produced out of material documentary conditions and simultaneously, in a secondary articulation, exert influence back upon the discipline to which they belong" (Wyrill "The Archival Turn" 23). This thesis's archive draws elements from a variety of sources, and the traces of these other archives undoubtedly remain. Accordingly, if the archivist cannot be removed from the

archive, this thesis must therefore bear scrutiny in its positionality and subjectivity. After all, as Wyrill states, "The object does not speak for itself. In interrogating and interpreting the object, or the archive, scholars inscribe their own interpretation into it" (Wyrill "The Archival Turn 31). It is therefore necessary to acknowledge – and perhaps confess to – the affectionate dynamic which thickened due to semi-regular exchanges over email with Poland and later through the interview itself. Close analysis of Poland's personal *Shades* archive has undoubtedly also left a subjective impact. This thesis cannot proceed without recognising how this subjectivity between author and researcher puts into question this project's own integrity and virtue. On the other hand, there must also be the consideration that this line of argument should not go as far as to say that these findings, arguments and interpretations should be disregarded. After all, it is from this subjectivity and connectivity that subsequent arguments can spring, and that there will never truly be academic material that is untainted by the subjectivity of its creator. The subjectivity and positionality of the author must, of course, in turn be brought into question - as will occur later in this chapter.

The interview to which this thesis repeatedly refers has undoubtedly been the most important source of information with regard to the inner workings of Poland's writing and the analysis of *Shades*. From the very beginning, with emails first being sent back and forth, Poland was very happy to speak and to share information about her text, the influences on that text, and herself. After working through ethical approval, Poland agreed to be interviewed and was sent a set of questions[3], with the comment that she was welcome to take out anything she felt was unsuitable. As she had been with all other communications, Poland was amenable to everything that had been proposed, though personal factors meant that the interview had to take place electronically rather than in person and was held via Zoom[4]. The interview was constrained even further by the programme's inbuilt forty-minute cut-off time which cut the livestream off mid-sentence, which meant that the hour and a half interview includes a few minutes between the halves to work through the logistics of technology and choose the right Zoom link to get back onto the call. However, the technical practicalities of dealing with Zoom and the removal of the extra, more personal and physical details of an in-person conversation were largely ignored after the initial shyness of meeting each other overcame both parties' excitement and interest about the topic being discussed. Poland made herself very accessible in the interview and gave answers that the public

[3] See Appendix 3 which includes a transcription of the interview.
[4] A software programme for videotelephony purposes.

had not had access to before. Her answers clarified several gaps in information in her archive on *Shades* and thus informed this thesis's own archive.

Poland's answers to certain questions had a rehearsed quality, at times mirroring portions of past speeches that she had given many years ago. This perhaps shows an unconscious return to a learnt script of answers that she would give to journalists which could also be seen in the answers she had previously given journalists when interviewed. The subconscious, off-by-heart quality of these responses also hinted at a method of answering media questions to the point of establishing a set reality and making it more difficult to find more focused, new information. Other answers in the interview felt a lot more natural and had the quality of a conversation rather than a formal, research-focused interview employing a purely objective tone. There was an undeniable affection in the verbal and written correspondences – one that was forged perhaps from a sense of flattery and a perception that Poland felt considering that this project is one that has followed her footsteps. She had taken the same 'pilgrimage' to St. Matthew's that she had taken when she was a teenager[5]. Mid-interview, she stated: "My dear, dear Emily. I have to tell you that I talk to [my characters] all the time. Once my child, who was about eight at the time, said 'Who are you talking to? Why aren't you talking to me?'. And she was quite right" (Poland Interview). Poland's words are that of endearment describing a sweet, personal anecdote, but show the necessity of coming clean about the subjectivity that has grown over the various interactions.

There is of course the danger of this project ending up attempting a chastened justification for the pronounced intersubjective relationship that has formed. Rather, a statement of culpability is required, acknowledging that this has been an interaction between a young white woman researcher and an older white woman researcher about a book that primarily revolves around a white family, with several instances of secondary source material that focusses more on the coloniser rather than the colonised. It also cannot be denied that this close relation between the researcher and the researched allows for far more access and entry to the author and the material – particularly to information that quite simply could otherwise never be accessed and would be lost. It is not commonplace for a researcher to be able to engage so seriously with the author they

[5] Pictures of the recent visit to St. Matthew's can be found in Appendix 1.

are focussing on within their research and to be able authentically to see through their eyes and the intricacies of the behind-the-scenes creative production.

Poland and her Archive

The complex subjectivity and emotions that surround the reframing of family myths include the acceptance of a brutal reality which unveils family members not as the glorious figures featured in family hagiography but as villains. Poland, however, appears to reveal more of an inclination to manipulate her family's reputations creatively rather than the archive's historical records. This more conscientious manipulation may be due to a feeling of security in appropriating historical material that essentially belonged to her and she thus felt safe to address the wrongful praising of her great-uncle who had such a negative impact on South African society. Her connection to the very personal material also appears to have given her a sense of liberty to reshape and retell her own family in a far more creative sense by comparison to the more stiffly and entirely factually based historical depictions of the Eastern Cape and South Africa at large. However, one can imagine that there was a certain degree of responsibility she felt towards staying true to her family and their history. In her acknowledgements in *Shades*, Poland addresses her ancestors Charles Taberer and William Brereton[6] - who are great-great-grandfather and great-grandfather respectively. She states: "I hope they will forgive me for any liberties I might have taken with their privacy or with the events of their lives, but I know they will acknowledge, because I am the inheritor of their history, that I have loved them greatly and respect the memory of each" (Poland *Shades* 'Acknowledgements'). Accordingly, Poland takes on a measure of accountability for her family's actions within the colonial expansion in the Eastern Cape, but without fully discrediting – or slandering – her ancestors and heritage. Instead, she deals with her family with a certain measure of loving care while treading the dangerous path between objective and subjective truth.

Poland thus takes on a sense of accountability, encouraged it seems by a combination of her academic work and the input of two particular family members - her mother and her great-uncle, Gerald Bussy - who were not as enamoured of the family myths. There is, however, a degree of romanticisation in *Shades* that is evident in the characters who represent her family, and

[6] Charles Taberer was the priest at the St. Matthew's mission station between 1872 and 1913.

particularly the storyline which features a love triangle between Frances, Walter and Victor is evidence of this. Simultaneously, Poland tackles the hagiography that surrounds her great-uncle that remains in place - both in her family myths and within South African society - despite his role in the development of the migrant labour system. There remains the matter, however, as to how far Poland's romanticisation can be justified – particularly with a historical background of exploitation and mass identity destruction that followed the colonialists. Poland's novel does involve a sense of humanising the colonial – specifically the British missionaries – in the acts of service and kindness that she describes. The tableau she creates is one that she has presented as a potential reality through the fictionality and interpretations of her own personal history.

Poland has not denied the deep connection she has with her characters and how her attachment has had an effect on how specific characters have been portrayed. While Poland's attachment to Walter is obvious, it is Crispin whom she has said she felt drawn to the most. The character Crispin was inspired by an infant grave located a few meters away from the St. Matthew's church[7]. The character was created through a memory of the visible tragedy of an infant's grave and the juxtaposition of innocence and death the image evoked. Crispin is almost entirely fictional, yet his suicide prompted by his loss of innocence has a faint parallel. While Walter is arguably the main character in *Shades* with a narrative that focuses on his character arc, it is Crispin's characterisation as a liminal figure that speaks to Poland's own grappling with the colonial versus the indigenous amaXhosa cultures. He is a figure who bridges the gap between Xhosa and missionary, between the Christian faith and Xhosa spirituality, and between fact and fiction – ultimately representing Poland's own internal debates. Crispin's liminality is addressed in more depth in Chapter 3.

Poland stated in the interview that, "I think [the novel] started off more fictional and then became more factional" (Poland Interview). While this answer of course complicates this thesis's hypothesis that the fictional is based on the factual, Poland's response does also reveal a different approach to writing her text. The addition of historical facts after fictional material has initially been placed down indicates how Poland utilised these facts to direct her narrative and to bolster the pre-existing fiction. Her placement of historical fact also meant that she could manipulate the

[7] Appendix 1(e) shows a photo of the grave.

narrative so that particular events in the novel could be paired with some form of historical information for greater three-dimensionality and impact. Poland has a fascination with the material she unearths and works with which has informed the choices she has made when it comes to deciding the scale of fact and fiction. She confessed that, "As I got into the story, [and] the more research I did, the more ideas and knowledge and links came to me of where to go next and, and how to do it" (Poland Interview). Her statement shows how *Shades* was constructed through a process that revolved around building up information, both before she truly began the novel and as she progressed in her writing. Poland recalls the stories that her mother would tell of her family, stating how: "I was deeply aware of my own family history because my mother had always talked to me about it, and my great-uncle told me so much about the mission when I was a teenager, so I had this real sense of belonging. To that family and that place. And also because I was brought up in the Eastern Cape" (Poland Interview). Her interest in the stories of St. Matthew's and in the Eastern Cape in general was therefore a crucial factor in inspiring her to write *Shades.*

Poland acknowledged that she was faced with certain restrictions when it came to historical accuracy. She was faced with having to keep true to South African history and the history of her family while working with limited material and non-negotiable historical events. For example, it was a fundamental requirement that her great-grandparents had to end up together by the end of the novel to accentuate the novel's concerted effort to include a degree of historical factuality. The characters Daisy and Walter are ultimately her great-grandparents, and her family line would not exist if the two did not pair up. For *Shades* to make sense, characters who had been based on real people had to have specific characteristics, actions and roles: the novel needed a 'golden boy' connected to the mines, a young headstrong female character and a newcomer priest whose presence alters the dynamics. The novel's reliance on archival material therefore bound the narrative to a certain level of historical accuracy and restricted how far Poland could push her fictionality.

While Frances and Walter truly do depict her real-life great-grandparents – Daisy and William – Poland chooses Victor to subvert the factuality of her ancestral history. Victor plays both love interest and antagonist within *Shades*, and ironically becomes the greatest unifier for Frances and Walter. In Victor's case, Poland chose an historical figure whose impact on the South African socio-political society is well-known to fashion a semi-fictional character with a suitable

degree of legitimacy. However, while Victor is in many ways a particularly factually accurate depiction of Harry Taberer, Poland chose to modify her family tree in *Shades*. Harry Taberer was Daisy Brereton's brother, meaning that in reality Daisy would have been Victor's sister. Instead, Victor is given the role of a non-blood related cousin in *Shades*, allowing him to become Daisy's love interest and giving Poland the opportunity to complicate her plot further. Poland's explanation for the alteration is that Frances "had a very special person that she had met when she was at boarding school, who was the real love of her life […] But I couldn't have two strapping cricket playing heroes. So, I had to make a choice there" (Poland Interview). Harry Taberer had to appear in *Shades* because of his involvement in the formation of the migrant labour system and the factuality it brought to *Shades* so Poland subverted him and used Victor as his proxy to suit her own intentions. Using Harry Taberer's history meant that Poland had a well-rounded character and a chance to combine ancestral and South African histories and fiction.

Poland's Socio-political Understanding and Self-awareness

"Being white, middle class, all of those things," Poland stated carefully, "I had to be incredibly careful because I am very aware that apprehending other people's history is a hugely sensitive subject and one that I have never been cavalier about, I hope. And especially since *Shades* was written, because one has a huge responsibility" (Poland Interview). Poland grew up in the Eastern Cape, attending Rhodes University in Makhanda, formerly Grahamstown, for her Bachelor of Arts Degree where she majored in Anthropology and isiXhosa – an unprecedented combination at the time. This was followed by an Honours Degree at Stellenbosch University in African Languages, and later a PhD at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal with a thesis titled, "A Descriptive Study of the Sanga-Nguni Cattle of the Zulu people". Her PhD thesis reveals an academic trajectory within the multidisciplinary combination of anthropology, history and African languages which speaks to the topics of all her historical fiction novels.

Poland's initial interest in Xhosa began in school and continued in university. She states: "I just knew that I had to do Xhosa and obviously the subject that went well with that was anthropology", and the combination of African languages and anthropology became central to her academic work. The Rhodes University senate at the time thought her enthusiasm for the subject combination of drama, anthropology, isiXhosa and isiZulu 'outlandish', but Poland finished her

undergraduate degree with Xhosa and anthropology as her majors. Poland highlighted her interest in the combination of Zulu, Xhosa and anthropology because it spurred her to "immerse [herself]" in the material (Poland Interview). Fittingly, Poland stated later in the interview that, "To be a South African, you have to learn an African language" (Poland Interview). Her opinion both indicates an obligation towards fully grasping the Xhosa and Zulu languages to situate herself within the indigenous cultures which she wrote about and echoes the beliefs of her great-uncle Bussy.

Poland noted that due to her interest in and research into both anthropology and South African indigenous languages, "I had the resources to know where to look for, where to look for the work [when it came to the customs and traditions and things]", particularly when it came to creating the setting for her Eastern Cape historical fiction (Poland Interview). However, Poland did note that, "[O]bviously there are some wonderful older histories, but the whole way of writing…the whole way of looking at it has changed considerably" (Poland interview). She continued:

> You were taught a quite different history. What I was taught and the whole thing of the writing of South African history has really only blossomed properly in the last short while. What I had access to [at that time] was not great. You know, one didn't have the people to ask for the right links. I mean, obviously there are some wonderful older histories but the whole way of writing…the whole way of looking at it has changed considerably. And when I wrote *Shades*, the new history was starting to be published, developed with a different sort of bias and a different way of dealing with it. So, I was coming in at, in a sense, both as an amateur, but also at a time when that was changing quite a lot (Poland Interview).

Poland makes certain to draw attention to the bias of the political context during the period in which she was writing in the early 1990s, and though she strove to move away from prejudiced rhetorics of the time, there would nonetheless be an influence from her environment.

A particularly useful source in determining Poland's awareness of her own subjectivity of the subject matter and history of her novel was a paper Poland wrote – titled "Between Me and My Shades" – for the journal *Artes Natales* upon the completion of *Shades* in 1993. The next few paragraphs will focus heavily on a series of quotes from this piece of writing. Her acknowledgment of her very subjective point of view should be brought to attention first:

> I would like to take you on a journey to a place that is very dear to me and which has been central to my work for the last few years and which has culminated in my novel *Shades*

> which is about to appear. It is a place of decay and a place of hope. It has about it everything that is beautiful in this country and it echoes a legacy too of all that is tragic from our past. I can only tell you about it from a very personal point of view because that is how I experienced it. And in a way I belong to it, because it is the place from which my family comes (Poland "Between Me and my Shades" 3).

It is the acknowledgement of her family's role in the repercussions of their mission work on the Xhosa communities - and South Africa as a whole - that brings a depth to her work. It also emphasises Poland's understanding of the great socio-political complexities on which she touches in her work. Poland describes how, "Great-uncle's vocation in life was to create a system for the recruiting of mine workers, to centralise it and to have a monopoly so that wages could be fixed at the lowest level" (Poland "Between Me and my Shades" 4). She writes also how her great-uncle – "a product of missionaries" – believed his fluency in Xhosa put him in "a unique position to know the native minds", which Poland stated "helped to set in place of the structures that has so effectively destroyed society: migrant labour" (Poland "Between Me and my Shades" 4).

Poland does not shy away from opening up about the personal feelings that she had to confront when dealing with family members and their roles in history. Her comments at times convey a sense of sorrow for the problematic roles some of her ancestors played, her more recent family's complacent blind acceptance of her great-uncle in particular and a hint at the difficult situation she faced in critiquing her own family. However, there are also moments where Poland shows a sense of pride in members of her family. Charles Taberer is an example of this in particular; Poland notes that, "I was – I still am – proud to have a stake in this particular old man, and to have seen the magnitude of the work that was achieved, against such odds, in that little settlement so long ago" (Poland "Between Me and my Shades" 4). Mbongeni Malaba does argue that, "Father Charles's total dedication to the community that he serves epitomises the finest kind of missionaries that have worked in Africa" (Malaba "Marguerite Poland's *Shades*" 35). Charles Taberer was a major innovator in training artisans and promoting education for the indigenous populace. In a separate article for the *Sunday Independent*, Malaba states that, "[Father Charles's] genuine desire to achieve the best he can, given the financial constraints faced by the mission, is seen in the the provision of formal education, as well as the training in farming and the thriving production of tin goods - thus providing outlets for the academically gifted, as well as artisans" (Malaba "Laying Bare Colonial Relationships" 18). Poland therefore deals with the conflicting

sides to her great-great-grandfather. She had to weigh the positive impact Taberer had in arming the indigenous communities with knowledge to use in the new world that colonialism was shaping, against his function in Anglicising the Xhosa which robbed the Xhosa of their traditions and culture.

Poland highlights the mixed feelings she grappled with in her comment that:

> Two years ago [in 1991] I went to the mission again and the sense of belonging and the elation that I had felt on the other occasions was no longer there. Perhaps a touch of cynicism had crept in. The boarding house was falling. The hospital was closed. The dining hall had been burnt some time previously during riots. I cannot tell you the conflicting emotions. 'So what,' I thought, 'The old missionaries got their come-uppance. Such arrogance, such sly imperialism! Look what great-uncle did!' And I also thought – how could people let all this degenerate into dereliction? It was like an insanity. What was right? What was wrong? (Poland "Between Me and my Shades" 4).

Poland notes that *Shades* "had the greatest impact on me of anything [she had] ever written" because she had to confront her identity as the descendant of Harry Taberer and the impact that he had on South Africa (Poland "Meet the Author" 18). Her introspection led her to examine her "own ideology – political and spiritual" in order to acknowledge the lingering influence of the roles her ancestors played, alongside the legacy they left behind (Poland "Meet the Author 18). Ultimately, Poland realised that, as she states in her acknowledgments, her relationship with the text meant she had to decide exactly what she had the right to manipulate and rewrite.

The Reconstruction of Poland's Archive

Marguerite Poland's *Shades* demonstrates the bridging of the fiction, biography and history genres through the implementation of an archive. The resemblance between the Archive and the archive she arguably constructed is in how she collected a series of factual sources over which she became an archivist. This thesis's intention is to show how defining her collection as an archive gives the researcher the opportunity to interrogate the process in which the material was selected to appear in the novel and the usefulness in examining the impact of subjectivity on her choices in the novel's final form. The importance of reconstructing this archive is its enabling a clearer analysis of *Shades* through the dissection of initiate details apparent in the text. The first indicator of an archive lurking beneath the novel's narrative is in Poland's acknowledgement right at the

beginning of *Shades.* She states: "There were three events that led to the writing of this book" (Poland *Shades* "Acknowledgements"). These three events, she continues, were:

> The acquisition from the generous members of the Brereton family of the journal of Daisy Taberer Brereton, various papers and photograph albums, and especially Marie McCrae's wonderful gift of our great-grandfather's Bible.
>
> The discovery, with the tireless help of Sandy Rowoldt, of the letter books of the Reverend Cyril Wynche in the Cory Library, Rhodes University, Grahamstown.
>
> Three incomparable visits to St Matthew's Mission, Keiskammahoek (Poland *Shades* "Acknowledgements").

The three events arguably can be defined as source materials which became instrumental in her archive and in turn exert their influence on the novel. Her mentioning of the three events is the first entry into analysing her research processes and the subsequent cache of information and sources from which *Shades* was built.

Poland acknowledges those who added to the archive, those who aided in her research and the stories of her ancestors which were fundamental to the novel. She also takes care to emphasise the partial fictionalisation of those stories and how this may be controversial, especially to her family. Poland thus introduced to the reader the material she drew on to create *Shades* before the narrative even begins. Her acknowledgement directly expresses how the three events inspired her writing and how these factual occurrences directed her construction of *Shades* as a literary text. The bottom half of her acknowledgement also shows how her novel is partially driven by a feeling of indebtedness to acknowledge the influence of contributors - specifically ancestral figures - that goes beyond the general acknowledgements that are standard to a novel. The acknowledgement ultimately emphasises that it was family that inspired the writing of *Shades* rather than simply an interest in the history of the Xhosa people and Eastern Cape history.

Six years of writing and researching provide evidence of the major attention Poland gave to research and the selection of material she felt was most useful to inform and enhance her work of historical fiction. This process is undoubtedly comparable to that undertaken by an archivist creating an archive, deciding how to shape a specific perspective and subsequent narrative. It is crucial to assess the origins of Poland's archive in order to theorise the author's archive further. Most authors - unlike J.M. Coetzee who quite literally constructed an entire archive on himself -

would not imagine that the margin comments in Word Documents, scrawls on written copies and highlighting that accompany the creation of a novel could someday be useful to anyone other than themselves. Accordingly, Poland did not expect her archive to be viewed - her scribbles, manuscripts and plannings thought to be things that would be discarded once they had completed their purpose in aiding her writing. She said with surprise that she had not registered that she had created an archive in the process of creation, but she did find the idea intriguing. In subsequent email correspondences, Poland spoke about personally drawing together an archive of information she could find for *Shades* to help this project's research. She also noted that she would from then on start taking care to retain her 'archival' material and to keep it organised having had her eyes opened to the potential usefulness of such information.

What has been essential in the reconstruction of Poland's archive and finding its beginnings is analysing the interplay of fact and fiction. The general archive on *Shades* is messy, largely uncurated and therefore difficult to sift through, making the analytical process and generation of a theory on organic archive creation more challenging, as well as finding enough information to separate fact and fiction. As noted above, Poland indicated that the fictional account came first and the factual second, certainly complicating a seemingly obvious assumption that the novel would be based on the facts which had inspired Poland to begin with. Poland instead had a method of writing not out of fact, but rather of correcting fiction. As Mark C. Jacob aptly puts: "[Poland] has taken historical facts and made them interesting for the reader without sacrificing the authenticity of historical detail (Jacob "Identity Construction" 1). This of course links back to Poland's feelings on responsibility and "a real sensitivity towards not appearing patronising or try[ing] to re-write folk history" (Poland Interview; *The Daily News* 8). As an "inheritor, not just genetically, but of a whole family thing", her decision to focus on her own familial history shows that she was far more comfortable with working with the more personal material. The focus on her family's history meant that she could begin with fiction by actively manipulating the stories she had grown up hearing about St. Matthew's, and subsequently turning back to factual sources to adjust and strengthen the narrative and the fiction itself. While Poland's main sources were partially discussed in Chapter 1, they must be analysed in greater detail as they are essential to understand the relationship between source, archive and novel.

One of the most important sources Poland used for factual accuracy were four sizable letterbooks which she found by coincidence in Rhodes University's Cory Library while researching historical background for *Shades*. The letterbooks written by Reverend Cyril Wynche – the first of which was written at the end of the 19th century and the fourth at the beginning of the 20th – belonged to the assistant priest at St. Matthew's, who worked closely with Charles Taberer. The letterbooks cover about four years of Wynche's stay at the mission station and consist of letters he sent to various acquaintances with great regularity, describing the specifics of daily life at St. Matthew's. Wynche thus wrote prolifically – at times even daily – and Friedrich writes that the letters provided Poland "with an account of everyday Victorian life in the finest detail – right down to the hymn sung on Trinity Sunday" (Friedrich 14). In an interview with the *Cape Times* in 1993, Poland talks about how "[Wynche] wrote about the sensual vice of native custom and I lifted this straight out of those letters for the priest Brompton – who goes mad alone at an outstation" (Taylor 8). The letterbooks convey the intensity of Wynche's loneliness, and it is unclear whether his copious letters had many replies. Poland drew on the emotions Wynche imbued in his writing to humanise Brompton, who comes across in the novel as unpleasant and pitiful because he is both unwilling and incapable of letting go of his British identity that exacerbates his isolation and exclusion from the community.

Poland maintains that the letterbooks were "the single most important source of information that any writer could have discovered". Wynche's records on "the minutiae of everyday" were given to Walter – "the weather; the hymns sung in church; the numbers at catechism class; the rules of the boarding house; the price of horse feed" (Poland Speech (1999) 12). Poland notes that, "[B]esides the details of each day, the author's thoughts, feelings, religious sentiments came through as well. I even had insight into what he ate for supper – no amount of research in history books could ever, ever have given me so authentic a picture of a missionary's life" (Poland "Speech" (1999) 12). Walter's mule-like horse, Boggis, was even named after someone she believed was a friend or colleague of Wynche, which she again drew directly from the letterbooks. She believed that by copying Wynche's own records of his life and experiences, she could produce a character whose "daily doings" would be as close to Wynche's reality as possible. Poland thus gave life once more to a person who had existed in history through the partial fictionalisation of the historical records of their thoughts, emotions and actions to craft a realistic, though fictional, character. The interplay between fact and fiction – between the fictional Walter

Brownley, the real-life William Brereton and the memories of Reverend Cyril Wynche recorded in an archive – show the importance of the archive when it comes to not only discerning fact from fiction when analysing a character. In addition, it shows how utilising the archive can aid character creation and enhancement.

Poland's second major source, Charles Taberer's Bible, came to her by chance after a cousin discovered it among her belongings and sent it to Poland. This discovery was invaluable, according to her acknowledgements, when it came to constructing the character Father Charles. The Bible was given to Charles Taberer on his ordination and included various comments in the margins and the circling of passages – ultimately providing important insight into the personality and mind of the novel's patriarch. "I doubt" Poland stated, "that a clearer portrait of the cast of a mind could have emerged" ("The Story Behind the Story" 6). In fact, in the interview held with Poland, she argued that Father Charles "is perhaps the most realistic person in [*Shades*]" (Poland Interview). Reverend Charles Taberer's Bible was rich in familial and historical information and therefore particularly suitable as an archival source. The Bible gave access not only to Taberer's internal emotional state, but to emotion that was linked to his experience of his life on the mission station and those around him. Ultimately, Taberer's Bible was a significant find for Poland for an entry into her great-great-grandfather's mind and therefore deciphering and recreating the world within which he existed.

The third source was the memoir written by Poland's great-grandmother, Daisy Brereton – who inspired Frances in *Shades*. Daisy wrote her memoir in her eighties and it consists largely of memories and anecdotes of her experiences growing up at St. Matthew's. An inherent nostalgia and emotion are captured which are more characteristic of a diary, and Poland gave these intense emotions to her characters to add a greater degree of realism. Poland writes about how:

> I think the seed for *Shades* was planted when I was a very small girl and met my great-grandmother, on whom Frances, the heroine of *Shades* is based. It germinated further when I visited St Matthew's Mission near Keiskammahoek in the Eastern Cape, where my great-great-grandfather had been a missionary from 1872-1913. Family tradition, stories and lore all contributed. But the real core of inspiration came from my great-grandmother's memoir written when she was in her eighties – a vivid account of life at St Matthew's. This led to intensive research into the period and the place. ("Meet the Author" 18)

Daisy Brereton's recollections in her memoir further amplified Poland's interest in the St. Matthew's mission station, to which she had already felt a particular connection. The emotional quality of Daisy's words and the world she described greatly inspired Poland and motivated her to write a novel based on that particular subject.

Poland speaks of her own difficulty in finding historical material to support the fictional aspect of her novel. Poland was faced with the challenge of creating a convincing character and protagonist who had actually lived and from whose story the novel was based from very limited resources. Poland has stated previously that, "All through the writing of the book I was trying to find the inner state of mind of my hero. As he was based on a real person, my great-grandfather, it was crucial to be as accurate as possible. No letters, no papers, no writings survived and everyone who knew him well was dead" ("The Story Behind the Story" 6). However, Poland mentioned in the interview that there was a portrait of her great-grandfather which had hung in her mother's house and which she felt a connection to. "I adored the photo," Poland said, "the portrait of my great-grandfather who was Walter. I used to go and, um, chat to it when I was little, and I also knew from my mum [whose grandfather he had been] that she loved him dearly and that he told the most wonderful stories" (Poland Interview). Accordingly, while Poland had no direct material left behind by her grandfather on which to draw from, the impression the portrait left - a factual source - as well as her mother's anecdotes greatly influenced her creation of Walter.

Reconstructing Poland's Archive

The scarcity of resources on Marguerite Poland and the even more limited amount on *Shades* posed an obvious challenge, with the lack of analysis by other academics and reviewers. The fact that the novel was published thirty years ago does explain the limited number of newspaper articles and reviews in more recent years, but does not explain why there are not more academic writings considering Poland's aptitude as a writer and the topic's relevance in contemporary postcolonial study. In truth, there appears to be only one academic who focussed specifically on *Shades.* Mark C. Jacob's Master's and PhD dissertations focus closely on identity and landscape in Poland's novels, *Shades* and *Iron Love*. While Jacob's focus does not directly align with this thesis's concentration on the archive's involvement in historical fiction writing, identity and landscape are

both closely related to Poland's subjectivity[8]. Jacob's theses were valuable sources as they provided academic material which had the closest correlations to the arguments being made in this thesis[9].

Building an archive on Poland and *Shades* had to begin with finding material that was actually available, and selecting what could actually be used. The majority of information on *Shades* is available at Amazwi Museum of South African Literature, which meant the research phase of this thesis began by travelling to Makhanda and investigating the Amazwi archive. However, when one gets past the excitement of seeing actual material on Poland, Amazwi's archive is disappointingly limited to a small collection of mostly newspaper clippings and book reviews. Most of the book reviews on *Shades* are insubstantial, meant for the average newspaper reader and therefore designed for easy reading. There were one or two reviews that were more in depth, such as Mbongeni Malaba's contribution to the *Sunday Independent* in 2013 and to the *Bulletin of the National Library of South Africa* in 2017. Malaba's critiques of the novel stood out because of how comparatively recent they are to the other material and the care he gave to a critical analysis of the characters and the novel's setting. There were several speeches Poland had given for different occasions, though it was interesting to note the speeches had sections that were copied from previous speeches she had given.

Included were private correspondences that Poland had donated; the intimacy of the exchanges was beneficial as primary sources on Poland and her personal thoughts. These letters included correspondences Poland had with Guy Butler, Alan Webster - an East London English teacher who was particularly interested in her work - and Douglas Reid Skinner. Poland writes in her letter to Skinner about her discovery of Wynche's letterbooks, stating how:

> The muse has also returned. Suddenly, it's emerged out of the dark. Never been so pleased to see anyone! What it brings with it is another matter. I think I found it back in Grahamstown two weeks ago when I unearthed some amazing old letters in Cory library which I hadn't known existed. My relief as I read was overwhelming. Funny, crumbly old pages in a journal – copies of letters sent by a rather pedantic old curate to his family in England but just full of the bits of the jigsaw I'd been looking for (Poland "Letter to Skinner")

[8] This is discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

[9] Using one academic source can be problematic due to the limited outlook that a singular academic provides, but there was not much choice other than to pay particular attention to Jacob's work.

The appearance of the letters in a public archive showed Poland's willingness to share the intimacy of the exchanges, exposing her candidness and self-awareness towards her subjectivity.

There are three specific documents at Amazwi that proved particularly useful. Firstly, there was a book of chapter summaries that showed Poland's plans for what specific chapters would include, the general outline of chapters and the skeleton for what the novel would become. The chapter summaries were all brief and often confusing, but revealed the personal process Poland used to write *Shades*. They also included notes on what historical material needed to be included and at what point it should be placed - both for the best effect and to be historically accurate. Secondly, Poland had also donated one of her first manuscripts for *Shades*. She originally titled her novel *Striker of the Sun* which was the first glaringly obvious difference between the two versions. In general, the manuscript has a relatively similar overarching storyline to *Shades*, with several characters with similarities and various different deviations to their counterparts in the final version. A key difference between the draft and final versions of *Shades* is *Striker of the Sun*'s far more pronounced exploration of the Great Cattle Killing and its impact on the Xhosa people. This theme becomes less pronounced in *Shades* and is instead used to contextualise the characters and setting. Comparing the manuscript to the final version is useful to see how Poland's ideas evolved and later solidified. However, it is the scribbles in the margins of the manuscript, excessive highlighting of sentences and summaries at the end of each chapter which are particularly insightful. The very human evidence of a writer's presence in the archive as they cut, pasted, scratched out and wrote is a goldmine for a researcher when retracing the author's research and writing processes.

Thirdly, there is Poland's "Honeysuckle" book which consisted of various random ideas and notes, and included a large degree of historical information which seemed to have been carefully collected and shows the process of being integrated into her novel. Quotes from Reverend Cyril Wynche's letter books appear, such as Wynche's entry in 1899 about how "there was a suspension of the weekly mail train", which is duplicated exactly in the novel (Wynche). There is a page titled 'spellings', on which she wrote, "To be consistent, these spellings have been adopted", as well as notes on chapter summaries, general ideas and self-created glossaries. (Poland "Honeysuckle book"). The most intimate section of the Honeysuckle book is what appears to be a draft of the novel's acknowledgement: "This book" writes Poland, "was finished at 2:56 am on 9th

January 1992" (Poland "Honeysuckle Book"). This sentence immediately brings the feelings of exhaustion and intimacy associated with the early hours of the morning combined with an image of a private joy and celebration that is being shared from a very intimate space to the outside world. There is such close attention to the time – to the very minute – to capture exactly when she had finally finished writing. Yet, this sentence denoting the very specifics of her success is not included in her acknowledgments in the version of *Shades* that was printed. Once again, it is only digging into the archive and through that into the author's archive that the researcher becomes privy to small moments such as this which hold so much weight for the author themselves.

Poland confessed that, "I'd be genuinely interested to see what is in [Amazwi] because I can't remember. […] I just wanted to get rid of the stuff, so I sent it to [Amazwi] because they had taken all my children's stories and manuscripts" (Poland Interview). In response to the notion of an author's self-made archive, Poland stated that "[n]ow I'm much more aware of how important it is to keep records and to organise it, and to organise it on the computer as well" (Poland Interview). She admitted that what constituted her own archive was "pretty chaotic" largely because during the writing period, she had not thought that anybody would, A, publish it or B, want the material that was left over" (Poland Interview). Poland did not convey a particular sense of worry or embarrassment at having her private research available to the public at large, replying instead that: "I'm very glad that it's available. And I have no fearful secrets that I don't want anybody to see. […] If somebody wants to use it, that's great and I'm just really pleased that you did" (Poland Interview). With a smile, she also stated that: "I hope you find quite a lot, and I'm sure you found a lot of chaos. And if you can read my handwriting, I'm impressed" (Poland Interview).

Chapter 3: A Close(r) Analysis

"Perhaps all writing is self-indulgence and writing an historical novel in which one is the manipulator of events that happened long ago, is an act of great presumption. One is setting oneself up to judge the doings in the lives of others no longer here to defend themselves or their actions" (Poland "Meet the Author" 5)

Introduction

Shades is at surface level a story of the white missionaries living at the St. Matthias's mission station, their interactions with each other and the surrounding community and ultimately the arrival of Walter Brownley. Poland's use of a narrative base that is seemingly conventional provides a framework of reference due to the ties this simple narrative has with the factual archive of her family's history. Poland fleshes out the narrative arc with archival material about the history of the mission station region – the Keiskamma valley, Eastern Cape – in relation to the wider histories at play during the turn of the 19th century. Poland's academic interests in Anthropology and Xhosa introduced her to postcolonial theory and a blooming interest in South African history. She had also always been fascinated by the stories she had been told as a child about the St. Matthew's mission station and the family members who lived there. The combination of academic, historical and personal interest spurred and enabled her to creatively explore family myths while challenging her ancestors' colonial participation.

The purpose of Chapter 3 is to find and assess links between Poland, her archive and *Shades* by using close analysis. *Shades* is a novel that revolves around its characters rather than its narrative, and it is for this reason that the characters will be paid the most attention. A close analysis of the characters must be accompanied, however, by an examination of the setting; Poland pays close attention to the natural worlds, and her descriptions of landscape in particular almost always indirectly reference Eastern Cape history. A close analysis of character must include an analysis of setting to achieve a comprehensive examination of Poland's archive and its influence on *Shades*. It is for this reason that Chapter 3 begins by analysing Poland's use of landscape in *Shades* and her choice to personify it. What follows are sections that become increasingly more specific.

This chapter analyses three characters, Benedict, Crispin and Walter, but pays the most attention to Benedict in order to examine how Poland created a fictional character to represent a specific history. To do so, it first provides a historical contextualisation which is essential to understanding Benedict as well as his relationships with Crispin and Walter. Benedict Matiwane is undoubtedly representative of the early black South African intellectuals of the 19th and early 20th century. Running parallel to the 'love story' narrative, therefore, is a more subtle but evocative

sub-narrative which follows how mission-educated Benedict comes to represent the historical black intellectual tradition. Benedict's close relationship to Poland's archive while being one of the few main characters not based on a real person makes him a particularly useful character to use for close examination.

Language, Temporality and Timeliness

Poland's writing style moves away from the more standardised use of punctuation due to her use of commas which sometimes extend her sentences over several lines, rather than choosing to regularly shorten her sentences with fullstops. This atypical punctuation grants her writing a flowing, wandering quality which results in fluid, forward-moving sentences that reach continually onwards. Additionally, the resulting lengthy sentence structure is characterised by a rich descriptiveness within the writing with a particular emphasis on landscape - borrowing imagery from African literature and traditions. The focus on landscape and the descriptiveness that accompanies it are more noticeable in Walter's own musing descriptions of his surroundings. Walter has a strange, hyper-awareness of what he deems at first to be an unknowable landscape. Poland's descriptions and implications of spirituality within the text begin within the first chapter with Walter's arrival at the St. Matthew's mission station. Poland writes:

> Nor should he have been lulled into complacency by the sudden and unexpected sight of the abundant mission gardens, the large grey church, the houses of the catechist and carpenter and the Reverend Charles Farborough's bungalow with its fragrant garden – a small enclave of order and repose – when the wagon breasted the last hill and started the dusty descent towards the little settlement of St Matthias (Poland 9).

A few paragraphs above this passage is Walter's musings on how "the brooding of a battlefield remained" in the landscape that surrounded him, and how his surroundings "seemed to be place for soldiers, nor for priests" (Poland 9). His rumination is contrasted starkly with the "cultivated farmlands, hamlets and orchards" that he had expected to see (Poland 9). Poland's word choices in such a short section – "brooding", "battlefield", "soldiers" and "cultivated" – already begin to signal the complex dichotomies between 'savage' and 'saviour' that play out within the novel. Owing to Poland's pictorial-rich language, she sets out a scene which is steeped in feelings of uneasiness that grow as Walter steadily approaches the mission station. It is both Walter and the

reader who are drawn into this apprehensiveness which is sustained by Poland's expressive language.

Time plays a fundamental role in *Shades*, which is noticeable at first in the lengthiness of Poland's sentences and the actual time it takes for the narrative to develop. *Shades* is a text that is deeply situated within temporality because of Poland's superimposition of the present onto the past and her constant interaction with the archive. Time, while of course a mobile, shifting thing, is tied down at points by the historical pointers and events Poland inserts into the text. These include nonfictional geographical names, dates of historical events and the socio-politics of the 1800s and early 1900s in the Eastern Cape and South Africa. Poland consequently ensures the credibility of the historical narratives she spins despite the novel's fictionality, and does so by relying heavily on the factuality of time and by speaking through the archive's power over society's acknowledgement of 'historical fact'. The tableau she sets up is a collage of descriptive and fictional writing heightened with her emphasis on landscape and what it represents, and the fiction interspersed with fact ironically adds a greater feeling of historical fact in *Shades* rather than fiction.

Her manipulation of time is also evident in the linearity of the text; the book's epilogue is a brief excerpt taken from close to the climax of the narrative which is situated near the text's conclusion. The text begins with the death of Crispin to whom the reader has not yet been introduced, creating an immediate sense of foreboding which is echoed repeatedly by Walter; he writes on his first night at St Matthias: "January 27th 1898: At St Matthias Mission there is an odd sense of predestination. […] It is strange how strongly I feel it. What is it I do not know, but I shall leave before it takes me in. I shall leave before I am its victim" (Poland 21). Poland's nonlinear storytelling subverts the reader's expectations and assumptions – instead disguising the reality and meaning of this opening scene through a reverse sense of dramatic irony in which the death of Crispin appears to be the main focus of the text. While Poland in fact subverted the narrative's chronology on the advice of her editor - and subsequently reflected she may now not have chosen to now - the nonlinearity works in her favour as an amplifier of the novel's overall narrative and themes.

Shades emanates a slowness that imitates a very different era devoid of the constant motion and progression of current day society. The text's take on the specific time period that *Shades* sits

within captures a society that is accustomed to prolonged waiting and slow movement, where information moving from one space to the next could potentially take months. Interestingly, Poland's concentration on slowing down the writing translates into a warping of the readerly time in terms of how long it takes to get through these extended time frames set up by the writer. This is particularly the case in the beginning section of *Shades* where the narrative is slow to unravel and the writing concentrates on description. While Poland has mentioned before that she would have cut down quite dramatically on the length of the beginning section if given the chance – and some readers may have been put off by the time it takes for the narrative to really move forwards – the gradual progression is well-suited to both the subject material and the history which it represents.

Some Historical Contextualisation

Benedict Matiwane's creation through the intersection of history and fictionality provides an opportunity to examine Poland's manipulation of fiction and her archive. Benedict's liminality can largely be attributed to his belief that he has no identity and the mental turmoil it evokes. Benedict believes himself to be undefinable – neither Xhosa nor white – until he transitions later in the text from a powerless figure to a figure who is identifiable by his intellectualism and proto-Black Consciousness. It is ironically Benedict's appropriation of the written word - which had originally been a tool of the coloniser to subvert his identity - that becomes his weapon against the colonisers. Benedict utilises the written word to prompt his emancipation from the identity of 'self-lessness' which had been placed on him by a cyclical system of rejection. Benedict as a character evolved from Poland's research and self-awareness of the reality that such historical figures existed and the role her own ancestors played in aiding in the formation of these marginal identities. Three stand-out passages will be analysed in depth due to their lucid exhibition of the eventual solidification of Benedict's self-actualised identity. These three sections include: Benedict's monologue in the Prologue, Benedict's 'baptism' and socio-political conscientisation through the cattle dip in Chapter 11 and Benedict's rejection of the offer to be hired as a recruiter. There will of course be tangential studies of other moments in the text that bolster these three passages and the arguments being made, particularly around the interplay of the archive and fiction and the usage of this material to formulate Benedict's formation and stabilisation of selfhood.

A close analysis of Benedict must be preceded by the historical narratives that he was created from as this historical context provides a more accurate explanation of how Benedict is so deeply situated within historical factuality despite being a fictional character. This thesis therefore turns to three particular histories for contextualisation: Nosipho Majeke's *The` Role of the Missionaries in Conquest*, Mcebisi Ndletyana's edited collection, *African Intellectuals in 19th and early 20th Century South Africa*, and Jeff Peires's *The Dead Will Arise*. These three historical analyses contribute toward locating what historical narratives Poland used to create Benedict and subsequently how she bridges fact and fiction. Following this is an analysis of the relationships Benedict has with Walter and Crispin, and an examination of how these relationships show an intersection between culture, race and identity. The factually-grounded representation of Poland's ancestor, Walter, contrasts with Crispin, who is a purely fictional character, and with Benedict, who is fictional but created out of fact. The analysis of these three characters in conjunction with each other accentuates the relationship between character and archive and the interplay between fact and fiction. The section moves finally to a close analysis of Benedict in which particular attention is given to identity and how Poland uses Benedict to depict Eastern Cape history from a specific angle.

This section focusses first on probing the function and motivations of the British missionaries on their arrival in the Cape Colony, and why their influence had such an impact on the indigenous populace. From the late 18th century, the Cape Colony's borders were constantly shifting and expanding with each war between the British and the Xhosa until they were eventually framed by the Orange and Kei rivers in the 1850s. The history of this period - and especially in the eastern part of the territory between the Sundays and Kei rivers - has been a topic of contestation in modern historiography when analysing the 100 years of direct battle for control over land, labour and identity this period included. *Shades's* St. Matthias mission station is located in the middle of this contested arena, imitating St. Matthew's' location in reality, in the middle of Ngqika territory.

In 1952, Nosipho Majeke - the pseudonym for Dora Taylor, a Scottish academic who was politically active in the New Unity Movement - wrote *The Role of Missionaries in Conquest*. The text galvanized the social science community of the 1950s with her candid interrogation of the British missionaries and their assistance in British military expansion. Majeke emphasised the deliberate breakdown of Xhosa identity and socio-political structures by the combined colonial

forces - military, economic, religious and social - and the subsequent remoulding of Xhosa converts in the 'image' of the white man. Majeke's central argument was that the missionaries, protected as they were by the British and settler military, deliberately undermined the key social and religious structures of Xhosa society - fracturing precolonial society and creating divides in Xhosa society. It was initially the outcasts of Xhosa society who were attracted to the mission stations with their new position of power, but the increasing economic devastation that accompanied military upheaval in the region led ordinary Xhosa towards the mission stations. Christianity and education offered by the mission stations, as well as the material benefits offered for conversion and attendance of church, were a far more attractive alternative.

Removing the authority of the chief - and amagqirha, the religious authority - over his people was combined with the conversion of the Xhosa to Christianity, causing a separation of the unconverted from those who had essentially allied with the British. The missionaries were thus, Majeke argued, the secret vanguard of dispossession and social disintegration. Once the unity of the Xhosa had been undermined by the missionaries, who placed their missions in the direct vicinity of the chiefs and offered an alternative socio-political authority to the traditional authorities, traders began to base themselves on the missions, who were the instigators of the capitalist penetration that further eroded traditional Xhosa structures and lifestyle. After this, military conquest was comparatively easy.

Majeke's analysis was superficial but revolutionary in its Leninist revision of settler apologism, proposing that the missionaries, who had been portrayed as philanthropic and well-intentioned, were in truth the key destroyers of Xhosa identity and unity, producing new generations who rejected the language, culture, religion and overall identity of their people and instead adopted Victorianism. Majeke's work has been superseded by subsequent historians and anthropologists but there is value in addressing some of her essential arguments, which are centred on the intimate ties between mission work, the British military as well as capitalist expansion within the Cape Colony. As she states, "The missionary and the military were never far separated" (Majeke 2) and it was no coincidence that "the main missionary movement, led by the London Missionary Society, was a British one and was in full force during the period of military conquest in the first half of the 19th century" (1). The British advance was therefore a blended system of military and religious intent, tasked with the introduction of a new economic system that required

an accelerated growth in cheap labour, ultimately tying the duty of the mission movement to the "expansion of capitalism" (Majeke 1). A major contributor to the rise of capitalism in South Africa towards the end of the century came from the establishment of the Johannesburg goldmines and the creation of the migrant labour system, in which Poland's great-uncle, portrayed in the novel as the character Victor, played a central role.

The migrant labour system becomes a dominant theme in the second half of the novel with Poland's portrayal of the rinderpest and the accompanying dawn of the migrant labour system. Poland incorporates the process of the recruitment of a new labour force built up of young men whose lives had been exchanged for cattle. Poland, while never explicit in her stance, communicates how the British treated Africans "simply […] as a means of 'revenue' for the 'Colony'" (Ewing 8). Maureen Ewing consolidates this in her argument that, "In the mines the Africans, stripped of their dignity, are the animals; they were exchanged for cattle, and the mines regard[ed] them as such", and draws on Sonwabo's experience within the mines and his statement that: "This is enough […]. I will die like a dog and I will be glad to have rest" (Ewing 8; Poland 178).

There were three key mission stations set up in the traditional Xhosa stronghold of the Amathole mountains after the War of Mlangeni ended in 1853: Healdtown outside Fort Beaufort, managed by the Wesleyans; Lovedale in Alice, founded by the Presbyterians; and St. Matthew's in Keiskammahoek, run by the London Mission Society (an interdenominational, though predominantly Anglican evangelical movement). These three mission stations became particularly important in the development of black education and religious conversion, and in the 20th century they educated the continent's elite black leadership, including Nelson Mandela, Robert Sobukwe and Robert Mugabe. Missionaries were ultimately a tool to smooth over potential conflicts by spreading a message of peace, all the while informing the British military of weaknesses. As Majeke argues, "[T]he breaking down of one system, tribalism, was at the same time directed to the integration of the conquered peoples into the economic system of the invaders" (65). The divide and conquer strategy, which the British then adopted in further colonial exploits in the 'Scramble for Africa', characterised this period.

J.B.Peires, an acknowledged international expert in Xhosa history and identity, writes about how, "Xhosa religion was closely associated with the other institutions of Xhosa society, a society which was ruled over by chiefs and dominated by cattle. It was not a static, unchanging world, but it was a world whose twists of fortune Xhosa religion was well adapted to explain and control" (31). Xhosa religion itself therefore played a dominant role in explaining the events and experiences of the Xhosa people as they transpired, and therefore held a strong influence within society. Peires states also how:

> Xhosa religion was primarily a this-worldly religion, more concerned with guiding people's behaviour in the existing world than with abstract moral judgements or metaphysical speculations. The Xhosa had no priests as such; the Xhosa doctors (*amagqirha*) spent most of their time dealing with practical matters such as omens, medicines, witchcraft and the relationship between people and their ancestors (Peires 30, 31)

By undermining the *amagqirha* and Xhosa religion through religious interference, colonial forces were able to destabilise a central facet of Xhosa society. Peires argues that a considerable part of this destabilisation was the fact that "Xhosa religion was deeply ambivalent about death, the most frightening of all human experiences, and the question of the afterlife" (31). He posits that it was through this "gap [...] [that] some of the central ideas of Christianity were able to infiltrate" (Peires 31)

"On the one hand," Peires continues, "there was a feeling that the dead do not really die but remain with the living, that death is no more than a transition between the state of being human and the state of being an ancestor. [...] But on the other hand, there was a contrary feeling, nurtured by the normal human fear, that death was something evil and unnatural" (31). It is therefore unsurprising that Christian ideas which spoke of the revival of the dead and therefore a chance to escape the unnatural purgatory of death would be of interest. It took a surprisingly long time for the British to exploit this opportunity considering the major clash in ideologies and the uncertainty it wrought in Xhosa culture, but it ultimately became an angle which was later wielded. The most extreme example of the effects of the pervasive imprint of Christianity is the case of Nongqawuse and the great Xhosa cattle-killing of 1856 and 1857. Peires notes that trying to understand and explain such a devastating effect is almost impossible with what very little information remains, but does assert that "the cattle-killing owed its very existence to biblical doctrines" (Peires 57). Christianity and its ideas had been spreading steadily since 1803 - the establishment of the first

mission station in the eastern portion of the Cape Colony by the London Missionary Society - and "the doctrine of the resurrection had gained ready acceptance, albeit in a form not anticipated by the missionaries" (Peires 57). Accordingly, the idea of the ancestors and ultimately Xhosa prosperity rising once again was a very compelling cure to their misfortunes[10].

A crucial tool utilised by the missionaries was education. The intention, as Ndletyana argues, was to train "[B]antu youth in industrial occupation and to fit them as interpreters, evangelists and school masters among their own people" (3). From 1854 onwards, the colonial 'divide and conquer' strategy concentrated on utilising education to create a new, brainwashed indigenous class whose task was to serve the interests of the British settlers, pacify the Xhosa communities and continue the cycle by converting the 'heathens'. Majeke describes this particularly well in her introduction. She writes:

> Now if a ruling minority can enslave the mind of the people, control their idea and their whole way of thinking, they have an even more efficient weapon for subjugating them than the use of force, the military and the police. For then the people themselves assist in their own enslavement. If the rulers can make the people believe that they are inferior, wipe out their past history or present it in such a way that they feel, not pride but shame, then they create the conditions that make it easy to dominate the people (Majeke introduction).

Not only did education work in driving contemporaries apart, it worked in driving a wedge between generations therefore disrupting communities as those who had joined the missionaries were removed from their Xhosa identity and spirituality to become 'white', 'civilised' citizens of the British colony.

Poland's writes in her private musings, which she titles "Some Notes on Writing my Books", that:

> The history is too long to recount here but Sir George took the opportunity of the catastrophe of the Great Cattle Killing to take under his protection some of the sons of politically important Xhosas – mostly chiefs – who, before, were not as keen as could be hoped on their children being educated and turned into English gentlemen. Now they all but gave their children to save them from starvation (Poland "Some Notes" 4).

[10] Peires goes into far greater and better detail in his renowned *The Dead Will Arise* (1989) about the contextualisation and history behind the great cattle-killing. However, while the aftereffects of the event are noticeable in *Shades*, Poland's text is set several decades after.

She in fact originally had the idea of bringing this history into *Shades* as can be seen in her original manuscript, but it never appeared in the final copy. Instead, the history of Xhosa leaders sending their sons to be educated is instead focussed on in more detail in her later novel, *A Sin of Omission*. Poland continues, writing how:

> At Zonnebloem they were virtual hostages (although such a notion would have been repugnant to the perpetrators). For all its educational merits and the patriarchal but kindly influence of Bishop Robert Gray and the many worthy, educated and dedicated men who served the school, the young Xhosa and Basotho boys were in a bondage which could never be broken. It was a shrewd political move on Sir George's part to bind them to a Eurocentric view of the world. […] If the intention was to educate and 'raise up', to Christianise and 'civilise', the undercurrent of such fine Victorian Imperialist intentions was to make these young men politically compliant (Poland "Some Notes" 4).

Thus, the reluctant dependence of the Xhosa leaders on the British meant a generation of future Xhosa leaders who were removed from their culture and Xhosa identity.

The turn of the 19th century saw the rise, in part sparked by the new philosophies that had begun to circulate, of a new class of black individuals. However, instead of the complacent, blinkered community leaders the British had hoped would lead the black populace came a generation of black intellectuals who used the education provided to them by the colonial government to fight back. The importance of intellectualism is in how "[i]ntellectuals," argues Ndletyana, "explain new experiences and ideas in the most accessible and understandable ways to the rest of the society. This is particularly so in a society that is undergoing a transition where people are grappling with and seeking to make sense of the new and unknown world" (1). This is the reason why Poland's incorporation of very real African intellectual names of that era is of such great importance. The literature of these figures is essential to understand the black experience of the time because we have been left with an archive polluted by colonial and apartheid bias. Literature written by black intellectuals included predominantly Xhosa translations of the Bible and the printing of Xhosa newspapers. Ndletyana states that "[l]iterary work itself was first initiated in 1824, with the production of a small spelling-book published at the Chumie (Thyume) missions Press" (2). The publication of the first newspaper edited independently by black writers, *Imvo Zabantsundu*, in the 1880s, was followed by *Izwi Labantu* in 1897. However, the lifespan of black-led newspapers was tumultuous due to inconsistent readership and the violence of ongoing wars, with only *Imvo, Izwi* and *Christian Express* making it to the 20th century. Poland makes an

effort to refer to figures such as Walter Rubusana, Tiyo Soga and John Tengo Jabavu, while mentioning the newspapers *Imvo Zabantsundu* and *Izwi Labantu*. By doing so, she adds a degree of credibility to Benedict's growth as a writer and intellectual as the reader witnesses his interaction with these notable texts and their authors.

Instead of being solely a method of subjugation and control as was intended by the British, the combination of religion and education became also a mechanism for rebellion. Black graduates of mission schools had the tools gained through the subversion and appropriation of mission education to gain a perspective and strength otherwise unachievable. Therefore, as Ndletyana argues, while "[t]hese early intellectuals, based in the Cape, owe their rise to the cumulative impact of missionary activities, as well as to British colonialism", it is essential to recognise that these historical figures were not just simply passive victims whose capabilities were supplied to them by their mission education (1). It was in Eastern Cape mission stations and their allied educational institutions that major political figures fundamental to the struggle against *Apartheid* were moulded in later years. These figures also convey the importance of the role mission education played in the formation of black intellectualism in South Africa: Steve Biko and Thabo Mbeki are both graduates of Lovedale, which Tiyo Soga himself had attended, while Robert Sobukwe and Nelson Mandela were once students at Healdtown. It is without question then that while "[p]opular collection of the history of Africans often centres on colonial conquest, and recalls Africans solely as recipients of modernity", as Ndletyana states, "[…] early converts were more than just recipients, but went on to become co-architects of South African modernity in their own right" (5). Understanding the character of Benedict is clearly key to appreciating the development of black independent thought in South Africa and thus worthy of close analysis.

Poland has made Benedict to be not only a representative of the blurred dichotomies of black, mission-born identity, but also a representative of historical figures who had such a big influence on the shaping of present-day South Africa. In doing so, Poland shows her awareness of what an important role these figures played, all the while analysing, criticising, acknowledging what role her family, as missionaries, played within this space. She shows too how, when one looks more closely at *Shades* as a historical-based text, Benedict stands out as a literary figure who has been utilised to carry the histories of various archives that have been laced together by Poland's use of fictionality. He is a figure who therefore illustrates a vast history that remains for the most

part tampered with and fragmented. By writing Benedict into *Shades*, a text that seeks to recreate, recuperate and reconfigure such a complex history, Poland shows the necessity of creative writing and fictionality if such a re-engagement with history and the multitude of archives that surround it can be successful.

Walter, Crispin and Benedict: Interactions With the Modern Missionary

There was an evolution of the ideologies of missionaries stationed in the Cape Colony which followed the general shift in the Christian doctrine at the end of the 19th century. Father Charles, Herbert Brompton and Walter Brownley embody this change. Brompton represents the 19th century approach to Christianity with his rigid conservativeness born from his Victorian beliefs which strengthen the dichotomy of 'heathen' versus 'civilised'. Brompton is ultimately driven mad and to the point of suicide due to his inability to move beyond what he comprehends as right, and his inability to evolve and adapt to change. On Walter's first night at Mbokothwe where Brompton and Walter meet for the first time, Brompton rants about how, "It is our duty to ensure a true standard of Christianity is set. One cannot put a lower idea before the heathen by way of making the path easier! I am appalled!" (Poland *Shades* 67). Father Charles in turn symbolises the movement from the 19th century to the 20th; he is both wiser and more circumspect, and is initially strong, confident and independent-minded. However, Father Charles grows increasingly hesitant as the novel progresses when he is faced with matters that demand adaptation and progression. Walter represents the 20th century missionary with more progressive philosophies and a willingness to adapt. When Brompton argues that "[y]ou have been here too short a time, Brownley. No doubt you are filled with idealism. The cruelty, barbarity and thanklessness of the old-time heathens brought about their fall as a nation. Look at the cattle killing", Walter counters by stating, "It is a great arrogance simply to impose ourselves on them" (Poland 67). Walter's more progressive - modern missionary - philosophies are depicted later with his determination to learn Xhosa which results in the church overfilling with converts whenever he held mass.

The modern missionary – defined here as missionaries involved in the new evolving ideologies of the early 20th century – is a figure whom Poland leans towards, particularly considering the more progressive stance. Walter and Crispin are both indicative of these changing philosophies because they are shown as capable of adapting, in Walter's case, and hybridity in

Crispin's. Granted, Crispin is ultimately incapable of maintaining his hybrid identity due to the urbanisation and the social and personal violence it entails which encroaches on his hybrid identity at the mission station - tied as it is to the traditional Xhosa culture that is being rapidly threatened. Walter and Crispin's interactions with Benedict are indicative of Poland's own familial experiences which are strongly supported by archival history and creative speculation. A deep analysis of Benedict as a fictional character who was produced by an adaptation of the archive needs to incorporate the concepts of Walter's adaptability and Crispin's hybridity in order to examine Poland's own creative choices when confronting her ancestors and a black figure whom she had created out of history.

The relationship between Walter and Benedict revolves around a mutual respect for and interest in knowledge, and this relationship is strengthened substantially by the resuscitation of the printing press brought to St. Matthias from the Mbokothwe mission which became a symbol of this respect, and later Benedict's independence. While Benedict is of course Walter's pupil, Walter shows no condescension toward him, unlike that shown by Victor and Emily and though Walter can never entirely understand Benedict and his lived experience, he is supportive of Benedict's increasing forthrightness, confidence and comparative liberalism. The printing press is an apt symbol of the histories which explain the rise of the Eastern Cape black intellectuals as prompted by mission education and the emergence of black-led publications. Walter's musings when he realises that Benedict has left the mission station towards the end of the novel are evidence of this. Poland writes:

> He turned from the window and looked at the old Albion standing in the middle of the floor, lovingly polished by Benedict. […] It had given Benedict a voice he did not know he had. From it had come articles and poems, stories and reviews that had been published and acclaimed. It had given him the first glimpse of the freedom that he sought (Poland 388)

Walter's previous words, however, contain a more interesting component when he queries, "Surely Benedict would not have abandoned their beloved press so easily, or gone without a word, without a gesture of farewell?" (Poland 388). The use of the word 'their' is revealing, considering that Benedict fully takes over the press from Walter once Walter leaves for Mbokothwe. While Walter may arguably have essentially 'founded' the writing and printing of material using the press, Benedict becomes considerably more attached both physically and emotionally to the press and towards producing material.

The form of twin ownership indicated by Walter's choice of possessive pronoun denotes a complex tangle of power dynamics between the two characters. While 'their' has connotations of equality and egalitarianism uncommon in the time period which highlights Walter's personal beliefs, the press should surely belong rather to Benedict. Additionally, the teacher-student polarity has complex racial and socio-political hierarchies, despite Walter's insistence that he will be Benedict's teacher in return for Benedict's own teaching. Historically, the initial black publications were established by missionaries to be taken over by their students who filled the publications with their own writing.

Crispin - the English-speaking son of a Reverend, fluent in isiXhosa, with an affinity and love for Xhosa culture - is the most suitable for inter-cultural mission work, given his linguistic flexibility and caring nature. Despite his obvious suitability, Victor is chosen as 'heir' of St. Matthias due to Crispin's dyslexia which the others believe make him unsuitable for the position. Frances, Walter and Benedict are all able to see Crispin's potential, but it is Crispin's hero, Victor, who really demoralises him. Crispin is emotionally crippled by Victor's undermining and domination to the point that he states, matter of factly, that, "No one notices I am here or not" when talking about leaving St Matthias (Poland 158). Malaba argues that, "The friendship [between Crispin and the Pumani brothers] highlights one of the greatest contributions of mission stations in Africa: the capacity provided by the multiracial environments which enabled people to acknowledge the dignity of the other and thus transcend racist mind sets" (Malaba "Laying Bare" 18). Crispin forms a strong bond with Benedict because of the dispossession both characters feel culturally – feeling neither English nor Xhosa - and personally, with their sense of alienation from their family..

Crispin naturally and without thought identifies as Xhosa when he explains his nightly excursions with Benedict, speaking to Frances of how, "We only learn songs and Kobus talks about manhood and things. Benedict wanted me to go with him. He hasn't any other way of understanding about being a Xhosa and neither have I" (Poland 26). When Benedict and Walter finally find Crispin's body, the final interaction between the three characters is indicative of the connection that was built from a common struggle with a hybrid identity. Poland describes how:

> Walter did not flinch from touching him. He laid his hand on Crispin's forehead and he blessed him quietly and turned to Benedict.

> Without speaking. Benedict picked up a small stone from the ground and walked to the traveller's cairn and stood beside it. There, on top, another stone had been newly placed. He touched it, saying. This is Crispin's.' And then he raised his eyes to the trees and the mountain far beyond and brought them back to rest on Crispin and he said in Xhosa as if he were addressing God on his behalf, May God and the shades of our fathers walk with us in our hour of need,' and he spat on the stone in his hand and placed it beside the other on the cairn. *'Qamata, siphe amandla'* - God give strength to us (Poland 385).

The combination of Christianity and Xhosa spirituality is both indicative of Crispin's true identity and the reason why Crispin could no longer exist in a rapidly-changing world of industrialisation and capitalism. This is also the final goodbye that Benedict gives to the Farboroughs and the mission station, and it is given specifically to Crispin.

Crispin's death is triggered specifically by the deaths of Tom, Reuben and Sonwabo Pumani – deaths for which he blames himself. Poland gives a haunting descriptive of how,

> They had died together. Side by side.
>
> He found them at the edges of the little battlefield.
>
> And he stooped to them and felt the warmth of their skin and saw the dark stain of blood seeping from Reuben's neck. The branchlet of the *mphafa* tree was still clasped in Tom's protective fingers. Crispin prised it out gently and touched each heedless shoulder with it. Then he divided it in three and put the pieces in his shirt against his skin (Poland 360).

Crispin does not hesitate to accept the responsibility of taking the *mphafa* branch home so that the spirits of the Pumani brothers will be able to follow and be at peace. As Crispin first begins searching for the brothers, he notices - "Here a hat, there a shoe. And there a man, lying on his face in the dirt with his arms flung out in supplication" (Poland 359). Poland has a particular talent for emotive scenes which is enhanced by her use of short, staccato lines that are punctuated by full stops – which are unusual in her writing style. Additionally, Poland creates evocative imagery by focusing on recognisable objects. Poland is also able to craft a violent scene without resorting to the grotesqueness which normally accompanies it, instead prompting the reader to come to a conclusion rather than simply providing one. In this case, her description of a man lying on his face shows that he had his back turned to the gunman, running away, while the word "supplication" indicates the man was pleading.

Ultimately, Poland crafts both the characters and narrative of *Shades* to make the consequences of Victor's greed and insecurities affect not only the indigenous populace and Xhosa characters within the novel, but also a character whom she personally felt deeply connected to.

"Crispin's devotion to his childhood friends, the Pumani boys," argues Malaba "enables him to emerge from the negative influence that Victor had over him, but his sensibility is overwhelmed by the harshness of colonial injustice, symbolised by the iniquitous migrant labour system, which Victor and Otto Klaus cash in on" (Malaba "*Laying Bare*" 18). Victor's control, which is reflective of the exploitation implicit in colonial industrialisation, is therefore finally broken by Crispin's empathy and connection to the Pumani brothers. Of all the characters, Benedict is the most aware of Victor's culpability in Crispin's death, and it is Crispin's suicide which prompts Benedict's self-liberation from the mission station. Importantly, the juxtaposition of Victor's egotism with Crispin's self-sacrifice is what Poland clearly grapples with when addressing her ancestral heritage. Benedict is a spectator unable to interfere, while providing the reader with a commentary of scattered, intermittent monologues which serve as a contextualisation and explanation of the deeper historical themes at play.

There is a certain degree of Christlike symbology that surrounds Crispin. The character was not based specifically on the life of one of Poland's ancestors, but rather on the infant grave she discovered next to the St. Matthew's church. The purity and innocence associated with infancy are amplified by Poland's descriptions of Crispin with blond, curly hair which floats around him like a halo, and even the name 'Crispin' echoes 'Christ'. The imagery of Crispin as an embodiment of Christ is strengthened by Crispin's self-sacrifice. While Crispin believes himself to be complicit in the Pumani brothers' deaths, his suicide becomes a sacrifice for the sins of others – and of Victor's sins in particular. There is also metaphorical significance in how he gifts the Madonna he has been carving since his time in Johannesburg to Helmina, his proxy mother, before he disappears.

Crispin believes himself to be deserted by his family, God and nature where he had once found solace and acceptance before he left for Johannesburg. Crispin had thought that by returning to St. Matthias, "safe among its trees", he would "expunge his burden. Set it down and walk away. The voices that announced his guilt - tormenting him - would soon be still" (Poland 361). Instead:

> [N]othing could expunge it. Even within the safe embracing walls of the house, the sanctuary of his own room with his boyhood things around him, the gestures of concern from those who loved him, he could not lay that burden down. The most familiar things - the taste of bread baked in a pot, the smell of the kraal, the sound of the bulbuls at evening, the caress of the sun as he lay on the grass in his mother's garden, back pressed to the

> ground - by their very familiarity, amplified the dark, bewildering silence in his heart (Poland *Shades* 562).

Crispin's identity is composed of four particular components: his attachment to the mission station community, his English family, Xhosa culture and to nature. It is unsurprising, then, that Crispin chooses to commit suicide at the *isivivane* cairn which is situated deep within the uninhabited, forested hills outside the mission station. Poland's first careful description of the scene is solely nature-based: "The cairn. The hollow. The rock. A small plant, a flower, star-pale and fragile, anchored by a root-hair high up on its face. And the flies – dancing, dancing – in its shade" (Poland 385). Again, Poland's sentences are short and staccato, dancing away from explaining to the reader and instead leading them towards a conclusion. There is a lack of violence to the scene, which makes her description of Crispin lying within the "leaf mould" with "half of his chest blown away" so disjointed and shocking (Poland 385). The flies which alert Benedict and Walter to the location of Crispin do not have the same disturbing connotation that normally accompanies death; instead, they are described as 'dancing'. The scene overall is strangely peaceful. It is significant that Benedict is the first to find Crispin, followed closely by Walter, as Crispin and Benedict understood each other best because of their hybrid identities that connect them.

A Close Analysis of Benedict

Poland signals in the very beginning of *Shades* - in the prologue itself - the complexity and influence of mission work within South Africa and the influence it had on indigenous and colonial identities. Conversing with Walter as they wait for Crispin's remains following his suicide, Benedict speaks of how:

> 'I am always told that I am a member of the family.' He did not parody the words or mimic but spoke them quietly. His eyes held Walter's. 'But that is one of the great delusions. One is given a hat and a pair of breeches, a name and a present at Christmas and a sponsor to pay the fees and one is suddenly a member of the family. Where is that family? Where were they in all those other times? Who cared?' (Poland 5)

This passage is important, firstly, because of Poland's deliberate choice to begin with Benedict's final words to Walter before his self-exile from St. Matthias. The reader is yet to know the significance of this conversation – of Benedict's growth from a passive to active player in his own life and crafter of his own identity. Benedict finally vocalises the truth underneath the charade built mainly by the overtly colonial Emily when he comments that he is only accepted as a 'family member' after being given Western clothing and a sponsor for his education. This of course gives Emily's demand earlier that Benedict be called in to "be here with the family" a more hypocritical, cynical edge (Poland 4).

By starting the novel with these ideas and the contentions they include, Poland ensures that the reader is made aware that *Shades* is not simply a semi-biographical love story but also a postcolonial critique. Poland is in fact dissecting not only how missionaries shaped the identities of the Xhosa youth through conversion, education and isolation from their own culture, but also signals current preoccupations with what it means to be a man in Xhosa society. The themes of dispossession, liminality and belonging are all apparent in this short passage, and ultimately beginning the solidification of the themes that run throughout the novel.

Benedict's departure from the mission station near the end of the narrative is also an essential passage to examine in terms of Benedict's emancipation from the mission station and from the identity it had used to bind him. Poland writes:

> In the morning, just before the early dawn had faded in the rising light, Benedict had gone. Unobtrusively he went, without farewell. He had said what he had to say beside the

> *isivivane* cairn and no further words were needed. Walter Brownley had been there with him and he would be his witness. There would be no lamentations, no recriminations: Walter Brownley would speak for him and Father Charles would hear the words in wisdom and love. He knew that too.
> He let himself quietly out of Mzantsi's house, carrying his bag, and he went to the printing room. It had been his refuge, the place where he had learned his skill and found his talent: a gift derived from the hand of unknown shades. He took a piece of paper and he wrote:
>
> > I have gone and wherever I have gone,
> > I will hold this place in my thoughts
> > and my remembrance.
> > It was the womb in which I was conceived,
> > in which my spirit has been moulded and to which
> > my heart will return, no matter what the exile.
> > But now I must be born. I must go forth alone.
> > And if I should return, I will return in freedom.
> > For without that freedom, I can never call myself
> > a man.
>
> And he drew the hat from his head: the little hat that he had always worn, with the feathers of a crane sewn in its brim, and he laid it on the table with the words that he had written (Poland *Shades* 385-386)

Benedict's choice to remove and leave the hat given to him by the mission holds weighty ceremonious and symbological meaning. The hat itself signifies a specific colonial identity placed upon him by the mission station – historically, black converts were given Western clothing to encourage acculturation – and by removing the hat Benedict gives himself the opportunity to generate his own identity.

Poland always includes a description of Benedict's carefully maintained hat with its crane feathers whenever he is visually described and Poland therefore connects Benedict with the hat as a motif throughout the text. The hat accompanies Benedict in the same way in which his sponsorship does; as Benedict muses, "Like a shadow, […] sponsorship went with [him] at all times: what would Miss Prudieaux-Brune say?" (Poland *Shades* 93). Poland describes mid-way through the text the contents of Miss Prudieaux-Brune's letter which includes "a request for a picture of Benedict for her to display at the Ladies' Institute Mission Morning" (Poland *Shades* 61). The request reflects the materialistic nature of the colonial enterprise, where Benedict is an object to be shown off – a knickknack on the mantelpiece and something exotic to be paraded in front of the other ladies. Despite the 'humanitarian' act the sponsorship believes itself to be, there

is no humanity in Miss Prudieaux-Brune's humanitarianism because there is no real recognition of Benedict's humanness. Accordingly, Benedict's removal of his hat – in itself a material possession – indicates his own recognition and acknowledgement of the colonial materialism which had sought to define him until this point.

It is also meaningful that Benedict chooses to return specifically to the printing press to leave his final goodbye for Walter to find, and that this final goodbye was conveyed through the written word. Benedict is certain that Walter would be able to convey accurately what Benedict would have wanted to say to Father Charles, and sees no reason to speak further with Walter after he had said farewell to Crispin at the *isivivane* cairn. Benedict's diction in his note to Walter employs strong imagery of birth, using words such as "womb", "conceived", "moulded" and "born"; Benedict's deliberate word choice solidifies the motif of his rebirth which appeared first after Josiah Mzantsi and his experience being forced through the cattle dip (Poland *Shades* 386). Important also is Benedict's insistence that he cannot call himself a man without having freed himself from the identity given to him by the missionaries who raised him. Culturally, Benedict cannot be defined as a true man because of never having been circumcised and not having undergone the linked initiation rites – and as such will never truly be accepted as a 'man' by Kobus or Xhosa society. Benedict shows, however, how he is able to break away from conforming to the expectations of Xhosa manhood, and instead reveals his own method of securing his personhood.

The relationship between Benedict and Victor is never truly amicable. Benedict follows Victor's orders in the first part of the novel not because he believes in what Victor is asking of him – like Crispin and Frances – but rather because of the power dynamics that deny Benedict the right to stand up to Victor. However, Benedict becomes increasingly confident as the novel progresses, and he ultimately finds his voice to resist and confront Victor from the cattle dip incident onwards. The most obvious example of this growth in confidence is when Benedict confronts Victor for attempting to manipulate him into becoming a runner for the recruitment of labourers for the mines. When Victor is surprised that Benedict is aware that he was behind Klaus Otto's attempts to recruit him, he states that: "You take me as a fool because I am black and dependent and think I cannot see the truth behind these things? Perhaps you do not even know the truth yourself. You have the power to act without much thought and still achieve the things you desire. That is your strength, but it will trap you and you will pay for it one day'" (Poland *Shades* 379). Benedict is both

disillusioned and enlightened by Crispin's death and the role Victor played in it, and the tragedy ultimately leads to a strengthening of Benedict's personal stance against the colonial enterprise, both on the mission station and in Johannesburg.

When Victor argues that he had nothing to do with the deaths of the Pumani brothers, Benedict responds with:

> 'It is not what you do, it is what you fail to do, that has always made you different from Crispin. That is why he has been somewhere out there on his own, looking God in the eye, and you are here.' Benedict went to the window of the printing room and gestured at the pasture beyond the church. 'Look, there are Kobus's cattle. How Kobus loved those cattle until they took his sons! Now he is running like a man who has a swarm of bees in his head, in confusion and shame, crying out for help from his shades. If he cannot hear them speak then he will sit in the church and he will say prayers that he does not understand and he will weep for his sons and never know if he failed them or not. He knows that he has been duped but he cannot say exactly why.'
>
> Benedict turned to Victor and he said, 'We are all expendable to each other, no matter what we say. You will go from here and I will go as well and perhaps we will return some time and we will remember the games we used to play and give some thoughts to each other and to the ones who are dead, resurrecting them just for a moment, and then we will go away and think of other things.' Benedict took a step towards the printing table and leaned across and picked up a newspaper lying there. He held it out. 'I am not just talking of us up here at St Matthias. There are men like Soga and Rubusana who see, who know, that when you have finished this war of yours and have raised your flag all over this country and brought it to the glory of your Empire - the one that we, as black men, are supposed to revere for having bestowed on us an education, faith, prosperity and all the other high-sounding gifts - that you will sell us out - perhaps against the advance of metaphorical cattle - and say it expedient. Political, economic, moral expedience - call it what you like. You will sacrifice our rights in order to secure your peace with the Boers and shrug us off and find some expedience to pin it on.' He paused. 'It is for this expedience that men like Tom and Reuben and Sonwabo Pumani are dead. There will be thousands like them in the time to come'" (Poland *Shades* 379-380)

For once, Victor is incapable of a counterargument, partially because Benedict is no longer willing to submit, but mainly because Victor cannot bear the truth of what Benedict is saying.

The contrast between Mzantsi and Benedict is particularly important when looking at the difference between the generations of black, mission-trained figures. Mzantsi is the unfortunate product of the missionaries and the British colonial empire - he is cowed and subservient, with an identity that exists only within his role as the catechist at St. Matthias, as provided to him by Charles and Emily Farborough. Benedict, in contrast, grows in strength as the novel progresses and he constructs his own identity and mode of resistance through the written word. Emily

bestowed the name ‘Benedict’ on him - Latin for ‘blessing’ - as a reminder that he should always regard himself as blessed to have been given the opportunities resulting from his closeness to colonial society. As the novel progresses he realises that Mzantsi embodies the emptiness of that identity and rejects its limitations for himself. The humiliation Mzantsi and Benedict undergo by being forced to walk through a cattle dip is when the two characters truly diverge from each other. Mzantsi is shamed beyond his understanding, and Poland writes how: “Bewildered – as though he’d been kicked – he spoke no word but his lips moved silently and Benedict knew that he prayed” (165). Benedict, in contrasts, reacts to the humiliation by using it instead to empower his own growth as an independent individual:

> Benedict Matiwane had been reborn at the rinderpest dip. Baptised not by fire – but by water and carbolic. He had watched Mzantsi, naked, crouching and shamed beyond his comprehension, waiting for the pain of the boot in his back, the bullet in his side, the lash about his neck. Abject, they had stood together before a felon whose power was the gun in his belt and the unwashed pallor of his skin. No triumph, laughter, nor remembrance could expunge this thing. Better to die like a dog than lay your naked shadow down before such feet. Better to have hyenas gorging in the heart (Poland 167)

As Malaba argues, “Emily and Mzantsi are keen on nurturing Benedict to become a priest, but the ritual humiliation that Benedict and Mzantsi were subjected to by a drunken white man – concerning a dip, during the outbreak of rinderpest – radicalised the former, whilst the latter was left smarting” (2013 18).

We do, however, see a small slip in Mzantsi’s appearance as an extremely devout and principled believer when he discovers Benedict has been seeing Dorcas Pumani at night. It is the only time the reader is given deeper insight into Mzantsi’s psyche, and Poland’s short interlude should not go unnoticed. “Mzantsi felt as though Benedict had betrayed him,” Poland writes, “overturned each lesson he had taught, each plea he’d made for purity and right thinking, each sermon, each catechism, each prayer that they had shared. And yes, too close, too well remembered had been the spectres of his own youth: the sudden taste of it, the shadow of it sunk too nearly in his flesh” (Poland “Shades” 235). Mzantsi goes on to reminisce about his wife who had died fifteen years previously and her unwavering commitment to performing her wifely duties of looking after the chickens, their garden and her husband. The intensity of Mzantsi’s loneliness is revealed alongside a deeply buried resentment. While he is hurt by Benedict’s rejection, Mzantsi persuades himself that it is Dorcas’s influence instead. Benedict’s decision to seemingly break away from

the church presents itself to Mzantsi as a betrayal of the companionship built from the hardships and experiences the two had endured due to their unique identity. Ultimately, Mzantsi is swayed by his belief in what is 'right', convincing himself instead that "[h]e would not shrink from his pledge to God and to the mission" (Poland *Shades* 237)

Poland uses Mzantsi as a foil to Benedict. Where Mzantsi is obedient and fully accepting of the colonial identity given to him, Benedict increasingly questions and pushes at the boundaries that demarcate his identity and his purpose. Mzantsi always believed that Benedict would follow his footsteps as was expected of him by the Farboroughs, but Benedict's breaking of the mission rules to go and see Dorcas Pumani makes Mzantsi realise that Benedict will never choose to conform as he has. Mzantsi and Benedict are each other's alternate realities despite their circumstances being the most similar out of anyone else at the mission station. They ultimately represent two sides of the history of mission education and its influence on black culture.

Conclusion

There was no historical figure Poland felt Benedict could be based on, unlike *A Sin of Omission* (2019) which centers on Stephen Mzame, a young black Anglican minister. The character was inspired by Reverend Stephen Mtutuko Mnakama who was a deacon of the Anglican church at the Holy Trinity Mission close to Fort Beaufort around the mid-19th century. Poland wrote in the author's note at the end of *A Sin of Omission* that:

> Had sufficient material existed for a biography and had biography been my métier, I would have preferred to honour the life of this young man with a meticulous history. As this was not possible because of large gaps in the record, and as I am a novelist, I created a character whose story was informed - however transiently - by the life of Rev. Mnyakama, which had moved me profoundly (Poland *A Sin of Omission* 403).

In the interview, Poland brought up her feelings about wanting to write a biography for a historical figure whom she had felt great sympathy for but had too limited material. "[T]his is an archival thing and I said it in the introduction to the book," Poland commented, "the archivists decide in their time what they're going to archive. And for example, so much of what the black students wrote has disappeared, but what their teachers wrote, or what the society propagated, or the gospel wrote, or the more senior white missionaries is the stuff that is preserved (Poland Interview).

Through Walter, Poland makes it subtly clear the positive impact her family had on the 20th century black identity when so much of the novel shows the destruction of traditional Xhosa culture resulting from the mission intrusion in the area. He is also used as an entry point to Benedict and all that he represents; Poland as far as possible avoids using Benedict's voice, but is able to explore Benedict as a character through Walter's close observation of Benedict's personal development. Benedict only exists factually in reality in a very abstract sense since he is a construct - a portmanteau character - from an amalgamation of histories. However, he is only given life and form through fiction - showing the power of the integration of fiction and fact made possible by the archive.

Chapter 4: A Redefining

"Might the term 'memory' now come to refer to a past that eludes archival fixing but that requires narration?" (Wyrill "The Archival Turn" 34).

Introduction

This thesis's assertions have thus far centred on exploring the concept of archival manipulation and application by using *Shades* as a reference point. Chapter 4 tackles consolidating the concepts and theories generated within the preceding chapters to finalise the defining of the 'author's archive' theory. In doing so, it considers how such a theory further problematises the archive and establishes - through an analysis of Poland's archive and *Shades* - how the subjective quality of a literary text's archive can help redefine the archive as a concept. Particular attention is given to the interview held with Poland as it supplied information crucial to the formation of this thesis's own archive and central arguments. This last chapter assesses the newly constructed archive linked to this thesis, as well as the practicality of locating the author's archive. It investigates how Poland's subjectivity in fact works in her favour to strengthen her writerly voice, and lastly to theorise and hypothesise the 'author's archive' concept.

A Newly Constructed Archive

A unique archive has been generated through the process of producing this thesis which is specific not only to *Shades* and to Marguerite Poland, but also to the arguments and theories that have been formulated by the researching and subsequent writing of this project. This thesis was written with a specific focal point and objective always in mind when it combined an analysis of *Shades* with research on Marguerite Poland. The intention of this thesis became further reinforced when the research process moved on to analysing what secondary sources and other materials needed to be selected for a specific hypothesis to be met. By centralising a specific objective/intention, the archive that was created became unique because of the influence of an 'archivist' with a specific intention for its use. There are therefore definitive similarities between Poland's construction of a historical fiction archive and the construction of this thesis's archive - particularly in how intention shaped the archive and the selection process of material. Just how Poland collected historical

research and drew from archival material, this thesis has not only attempted to retrace Poland's own research but also a broader scale enquiry in order to contextualise Poland's work. A side effect of the process of reconstructing an author's archive has been the expansion of a corpus of material that surrounds Poland - both the material that she had added herself and the material produced by outside parties. Poland's archive for *Shades* has extended much further from the original research material Poland dealt with due to the injection of new sources, debates and hypotheses independent of Poland. This thesis's 'modification' of her archive has produced an archival network of sources and concepts which bolster the original information available on *Shades* and Poland, with the material produced through analysis by this thesis forming a new body of knowledge.

Other archival matter researched and compiled through the process of research has taken on the quality of important, primary sources due to their role in informing the main argument produced by this project. This thesis's archive has grown to include a variety of sources which range from physical to electronic. Most information taken from Amazwi and Cory Library was copied down by hand into what became a sourcebook for this thesis, while there are also several photographs that were taken of certain material as necessary. Academic papers, theses, articles and other material found online were downloaded to form an electronic database of carefully organised folders. There is a ringbinder which includes both printed and handwritten chapter outlines, edited drafts of chapters and printed out secondary readings. There are the three different editions of *Shades*, though the 2012 edition became the most important to this archive as it became the text that was used for reading and for sourcing material. The book is as a result now riddled with sticky notes, highlighted sections and pen scrawls - ironically imitating Poland's own scrawled notes and ideas found within her manuscript and chapter outlines[11]. This specific copy of *Shades* has become an example of an archive and testament to the argument this thesis makes about the author's archive concept.

The question of what to define as a primary source shifted during the process of writing this thesis. *Shades* stands at the front and center as the literary primary text as it is within *Shades* that the analysis is rooted. However, as the theoretical concepts around the author's archive

[11] Appendix - photo of 2012 *Shades* edition.

expanded, so too did the necessity of pinning down sources which correlated with and supported the arguments being constructed. Assessing Poland's archive meant using her own central research sources as primary material - such as Daisy's memoir and the letterbooks. Primary sources for this thesis included: the material on Poland from the Amazwi archive; the interview with Poland; *Shades*; and the sources that were instrumental for Poland - Daisy's memoir and the letterbooks.

Locating the Author's Archive

The most obvious point of inquiry is the importance of locating and gathering an author's original material – their archive – and working out how exactly this material can be accessed. A response, however, can only be formulated when taking into account the experiences had while producing this project. Poland was not only available but was approachable and willing to talk about her writing and writing process – which included a very useful willingness to provide extra material unprompted. The process of locating the public material on Poland was easy through communication online to organise a visit to Amazwi while locating and accessing Wynche's letterbooks was a simple enough process of similar means. Accessing Amazwi and Wynche's letterbooks in Cory Library did, however, require travel to the two different institutions. Reconstructing Poland's archive included implementing a system to find and highlight potentially important historical facts within *Shades* and posing questions to Poland – both in the interview and over email – after having read through previous speeches and interviews Poland had already given. This approach attempted to find potential factuality in *Shades* by starting with the broader, more obvious facts such as place names and historical events then moving to identifying less obvious historical markers within the characters, narrative and setting. Ultimately, it was an intentional pulling apart of the fictionalisation of the factual and defining this manipulation in order to provide the analysis with a direction for where to search next, and informing when and where to burrow even deeper.

While texts, both physical and digital, are the archetypal inhabitors of the archive, tangible objects play just as important roles. Poland was influenced by an array of physical objects which bolstered her archive, but meant there had to be an investigation beyond the normal parameters of the literary archive. The obvious examples of Poland's archived material are the textual examples such as the letterbooks with its ink bleeding through the pages, her great-great-grandfather's

annotated Bible, as well as Daisy Taberer's memoir – now also including several of Charles Taberer's private letters which Poland generously shared. But there are also the less obvious. Visiting St. Matthew's was one of the major initiators of her interest in producing a novel on her 'shades', and the old mission station continues to be a place which she feels a deep connection towards. Poland even went as far to state that, "I heard so many stories and the places of which Bussy spoke are so familiar to me now because of living in Grahamstown and knowing St Matthew's so well, that it is as if I had lived them too" (Poland "Some Notes" 3).

An opportunity to actually experience an element of Poland's formation of *Shades*, and arguably an archival element, is to consider the important role music played in the writing of the novel which is conveyed in the text itself. Corelli's Concerti Grossi Op. 6 is a motif that is present in snippets throughout the novel where it symbolises the growing connection between Walter and Frances. "[E]very book I've ever written" Poland stated, "is always associated with a particular piece of music. In *Shades*, it's the Corelli" (Interview). She came across this specific piece on a trip to England where she attended a concert of Baroque music and, having been moved by the music, bought a Corelli CD. Poland describes that particular piece of music as having "haunted" her and that it was particularly "memorable" (Interview). Poland subsequently adapted Corelli's Concerto Grosso in G minor from its original concerto form - a soloist accompanied by an orchestra - to a solo piano piece to suit the role the piece of music would play in *Shades*. This subversion of something pre-existing in reality reinforces the concept of Poland selecting material, placing it within her archive and manipulating it in such a way as she deems necessary within her text.

Poland spoke of her attachment to that particular piece of music, commenting that, "I just love that piece of music, and when I write I always play music. […] [I]t somehow sort of sets a tone of what you're doing" (Interview). She chose the hymn, "All Creatures of my God and King" for Crispin's funeral because of her own personal reaction to the music; "I remember" she said, "I was writing and this particular hymn came on and I just thought, 'that's the one'" (Interview). Both Crispin's hymn and the Corelli are recognisable musical pieces and signify important narrative and character motifs. For Poland, the Corelli evoked emotions that "went somewhere between sadness and being old and being not too difficult, and just being memorable", while the hymn specifically signified Cripsin's identity and personality (Poland Interview). Both pieces of

music act as motifs; the Corelli is a symbol of the developing relationship between Frances and Walter, while the hymn characterises Crispin. Poland listened to numerous hymns while writing *Shades* because she believed "it gave the sense of the mission", which adds an additional element to how Poland selected material for her archive specifically through a subjective response. The two pieces exist in reality, meaning the reader/researcher is able to actively listen to the music and thus is given a small entryway into the author's mind and Poland's archive. As a result, the reader/researcher is given an immersive experience with both visual and audio access while interacting with the text and tapping into the author's own personal experience.

Closely analysing Poland's characters also provides a point of entry into her archive. Benedict and Crispin are two characters who are particularly good at representing Poland's archive. Both are technically fictional characters, but Benedict is undeniably a direct representative of South African history while Crispin on the other hand is a character constructed from Poland's own emotions around a connectedness with the characters and the setting. Poland stated that "Benedict is a construct" whom she drew inspiration for from those she worked with on "surveys for the Institute for Social Research"; she noted he was also "an amalgamation of people that I knew and the attitudes that they might have had" (Poland Interview). She consequently combined her interactions with the historical works of Charles van Onselen and Tim Couzens. Due to their status as the personification of her archive, is it through the critical analysis of Benedict and Crispin that the degree of the historical and the factual which has been utilised can be uncovered and retraced. The same can be said about the defining of general areas of academic study in *Shades* which can in addition be identified in order to narrow down and isolate certain sections of Poland's archive.

Identifying what fields of study Poland draws from assists in disseminating her archive and retracing her selection of particular material. Poland speaks about the interlinking of different knowledge bases – stating that, "It's the same, you know, with historical stuff – a lot of anthropology and a lot of mission material" (Interview). She mentions the influence of her interest in ecology on *Shades*, speaking about how: "I wish I'd been an ornithologist. I really wish I'd been good at science, as I wanted to go and live up in a tree and marry a game ranger and, you know, study plants and animals and birds. So, all of that is really important in what I write" (Interview). Nature is a dominant presence throughout the text, with special attention given to the Xhosa names

of birds and other animal life. *Taken Captive by Birds* is Poland's 2012 non-fictional memoir of sorts in which she explores her relationship with the birds of southern-east South Africa and an attempt to divine the meaning of their presence in the lives of both her and her family. She writes in the second paragraph of the introduction that, "Even if I do not know the scientific names of the birds I love, I know their mythologies, the skein that weaves them to the human world: the sorrow of birds, their cruelties and their tenderness, their triumphs and caprices, their artistry" (Poland "Taken Captive by Birds" 2012). She describes the call for each bird she mentions in *Shades* alongside their Xhosa name and the connotations the Xhosa have for each bird and what they represent. Her fascination with birds and their symbolism shows again her cosmological beliefs which always lead back to her connection with the land.

Xhosa and Zulu appear to have played a role in her interaction with Xhosa mythology and traditions - which in turn has a fundamental impact on her writing career. Poland writes that:

> I did study Xhosa and Anthropology because they fascinated and called me into a beauty of words, the considered image, the depiction of the landscape which could not be made Eurocentric, the calls of birds, the colour of green which is neither green nor blue, but degrees of something far more subtle and vivid. Xhosa and then Zulu were - and remained for many years - the wellspring of all imagination and seeing (Poland "Some Notes" 11)

Her training as a linguist and anthropologist - though she sheepishly admits that she does not believe herself to be "an accomplished anthropologist and have not been a good linguist" - gave her the skillset to explore the interactions between the two fields of study and how they overlap" (Poland "Some Notes" 7). The influence of her interest in and study of language and history informed the direction she chose as a storyteller. *Shades* therefore has a fusion of various fields of study such as anthropology, history, sociology, ecology and linguistics. Employing the concept of the author's archive therefore allows the researcher to isolate each discipline and retrace the origins of Poland's original ideas and the influences which informed her writing.

The Survivability of the Archive

The literal physical condition of the archive is the most self-evident example of seeing the archive's survivability. Two instances which are testament to the physical archive and its ability

to survive as physical institutions are the University of Cape Town's Jagger Library and Rhodes University's Cory Library. The Jagger Library originally hosted the university's main library before its transformation into the African Studies Library in the year 2000. It was subsequently partially destroyed in 2021, taking with it rare, irreplaceable material specific to African studies. The restoration of the Jagger Library remains an ongoing effort. Cory Library, established in 1993, has a particular emphasis on the preservation of Eastern Cape historical material and boasts an archive guarded by fireproof measures and carefully maintained heat and humidity levels. It is ironic, therefore, that Wynche's letterbooks, despite being over a century old, crumble beneath one's fingers with no enforced safety measures such as the use of gloves for the protection of the book. No digital copy of the letterbooks exists. Similarly, Cory Library has a substantial catalogue that can be viewed online, but only a limited number of those documents are available digitally and most are inaccessible from outside the physical location. Digitising the material would require significant manpower and funding which Rhodes would struggle to obtain, but the reality of time's degeneration of this material is unavoidable.

Poland mentions a text she came across at the beginning of her research for her 2003 novel, *Recessional for Grace*. She states: "I came across a manuscript in the [Cory] library which hadn't been taken out since 1947. Nobody had ever bothered with it, and it was absolutely full of these most wonderful metaphorical images to do with nature" (Poland Interview). Poland's discovery of a text deep within the archive that was very helpful to her writing shows how forgotten material can be unearthed and add to the constant intermingling of the old with the new - and shows how the archive is truly an institute of memory and forgetting. While Wynche's letterbooks and Poland's rediscovered manuscript are arbitrary in nature and forgotten by everyone other than a very select few, the letterbooks' deteriorated quality and the manuscript's obscurity are testament to the issue of the archive's perishability. One perishes because of its physicality while the other perishes because it has been lost in the folds of the archive. The transferral of the physical archive into the digital space seems like the solution to the archive's ultimate mortality - but a reliance on technology to ensure archival longevity is in itself a complex and unpredictable route to take.

Modern academia has undoubtedly had a dramatic shift away from focussing on expanding the corporeal archive to moving the ever growing archive electronically, and it is interesting to note the interplay between physical and digital archival practices that have occurred within the

construction of this thesis's archive. The archive this project has constructed is composed of both physical and digital material - and its final form will be an electronic submission. The digitisation of the archive of course seems to make the most sense in terms of ensuring longevity considering the mortal lifespan of paper in particular. However, this digitisation also brings a series of new conundrums. The first would be how to define this new form of archive. An archive, in the broadest sense, is an institution and repository where archival material is deposited and stored. A digital 'archive' can of course bear this role, but it is the characteristics of what is definably an archive which become problematic. The archive loses its identity as the 'Archive' when it becomes electronic and takes on the structural format and rigidity of a database because it loses its characteristic form and its inherent fluidity. The Archive cannot exist in the digital world and must instead become a 'database' - with an inorganic rigidity and orderliness.

Digital archivisation also brings the problem of information overload - there is an unprecedented amount of data constantly being recorded and stored. The real issue is that there is no real selection process because the role of archivist is no longer essential to the storing of data due to technology's far greater threshold for information retention. The result is information ironically losing itself because there is just too much of it, no more useful as if it had been forgotten or discarded in the first place. Without an archivist - or data scientist in this case - the information loses its usefulness. What is being made clearer and clearer is that archivists give information value; without intention, history and information do not have value. The argument has no easy resolution, but it is clear that the archive will continue in some form as a repository for information.

The obvious component to archival preservation appears to be how to keep track of the information coming in, staying and going out of the archive. Poland admitted in the interview that at the point of writing *Shades*, "I was not a good researcher in that I was very bad at keeping track of references and things like that, which I have improved on since. If it had been academic work, obviously it would've been approached differently" (Poland Interview). The first notable detail within her statement is the different approaches Poland had to referencing and archivisation when dealing with creative versus academic writing Poland openly states that referencing and archiving would have been far more important within her academic work, and less so in creative – despite the genre she prefers which deals closely with historical factuality. She did believe that an added element to the tardiness in the upkeep of her references was a lack of self-confidence as *Shades*

was only the second book aimed at an adult readership she had written. Poland maintains that she has subsequently become "much more careful in archiving than with *Shades*" (Poland Interview). There is an undoubtable evolution in her archival practices as her literary career developed, which was prompted in particular by working on the history of St. Andrews. Poland was tasked to help write the history of St. Andrews and particularly that of the black elite Anglican Institution that was once attached to the school. She was faced suddenly with the responsibility of her research helping to fill their incomplete archives and knowing that the sources, research and writing she brought to the project had to be catalogued and referenced correctly for the sake of posterity.

Poland addressed the topic of referencing in academic writing versus keeping records of references for historical fiction by stating how: "I did go back to academic work because I then started my PhD. So, in fact, that was when I realised how loskop[12] I had been about keeping the references for *Shades*" (Poland Interview). She mentioned that it was after *Shades* that she became far more aware and careful in terms of referencing and archiving – in part also due to her continued academic studies. Poland asserts that her non-fictional book on cattle – *The Abundant Herds* – as well her history on St. Andrews can be titled as "proper academic work" in which she states, "I had to have my footnotes correct and I had to have my referencing correct" (Poland Interview). This stands in direct contrast to her opinion on how she approached *Shades* and the process of record and referencing stage. "At that stage, particularly," Poland disclosed about writing *Shades,* "I was very bad at doing references properly. […] I hope that you have found it not too frustrating an archive because there are gaps in it, obviously" (Poland Interview). However, there was an undoubtable development of Poland's archival practices over the years and with each text. A point Poland made which stood out in particular was about the evolution of history over the years and the much greater accessibility there now is to these changing histories. She spoke of how, "The kind of history that I did at school was just outrageous. […] You were taught a quite different history" and mentioned how, "[W]hen I wrote *Shades,* the new history was starting to be published and developed with a different sort of bias and a different way of dealing with it. […] I had access to new stuff, but not as much as I had, let's say, for writing *A Sin of Omission*" (Interview).

Poland's admission that she was not a good researcher nor 'archivist' at the time of producing *Shades* adds a complexity to the argument that the material she collected to inform her

[12] South African slang meaning absent-minded or forgetful.

writing of *Shades* can be defined as an archive and Poland therefore an archivist. However, Poland commented in the interview that, "I don't think that any serious archivist would be pleased with me" but that "I think it is an archive" (Poland Interview). Poland's agreement that she could define her work produced outside of the text to bolster the text itself is at odds with her statement that she was an inadequate archivist during the time in which *Shades* was researched and written. It appears to have been the conversation concerning the question of *Shades's* archive which led to Poland's conclusion on the archive's existence. Over the timeline of her writing career, Poland has gone from discarding most of her archive once completing her novel to being aware of needing to keep track of the material that she was coming into contact with and using. Accordingly, an understanding of what constitutes an archive and the fluidity of the archive's definition could lead to the possibility of less discarded 'irrelevant' material which has the potential of essential information that can be utilised by researchers who are analysing an author and their text.

The research and writing for this project have culminated in the production of a collection of material and arguments designed for a specific purpose. The process of constructing an archive is a replica of the process of an author creating an archive for the purpose of writing a text. In its completed form, this thesis will become accessible to other researchers and students, much like how an author's novel will become available to the public. However, the reality is that future researchers who interact with this thesis are not necessarily likely to move beyond skimming through and investigating only a few of the sources that are listed in the thesis's bibliography due to their own research focus. The entirety of the archive that was created for the purpose of this project will not be seen as necessary – by the archivist, researcher or for this project once it has been completed – nor will the archive itself be fully available due to its undoubtable loss of necessity upon the completion of this thesis. This exemplifies the manner in which the author's archive's function is to aid the author in their creative process.

The Application of the Author's Archive in Education

Poland was confronted suddenly with the task of "actually really think[ing] about being able to answer questions so that students could write their paper on *Shades*", and "standing up in front of schools and talking about it" when *Shades* was chosen as a setwork in the matric syllabus – where it held its position for thirteen consecutive years. Poland was asked by Stirling High School

English teacher Alan Webster to not only come and speak to his students, but also to lead a tour of St. Matthew's. These tours ranged from 1997 to 2001[13]. Amongst the material in Amazwi was a letter exchange between Webster and Poland. In a letter dated 20 November 1996, Webster writes:

> The entire standard was unanimous that year that your talk and meeting you was the highlight of the year in English. It was also very noticeable in their essays and exam answers that they had a much closer affiliation with *Shades* than with the other setworks, both from its relevance, but more importantly from the personalness of your talk. It is excellent that there are 200 teenagers who now have a far greater understanding of their heritage (Webster 2)

By taking his students to where the novel is set, Webster was able to show the students that *Shades* is a deeply historical and biographical text, with relevance in contemporary life. For students living in the speed of current times, they received a contextualisation and an impression of the stillness and slowness of the space in which the story is set. They had the excitement of not only having the writer there - which turned fiction into reality - but also having had the experience turn into something relatable.

The students were given the opportunity to create their own archives to read and analyse *Shades* through experiencing St. Matthew's - and therefore St. Matthias - with the author as a tour guide. Webster's letter to Poland shows the benefits of such an experience. Researchers too have an archive of information - generally far greater than the average reader who encounters the novel - that influences their perception and analysis of *Shades*. A researcher must have their own archive of information which especially includes Eastern Cape history and Poland's ancestral history in order to critically analyse the novel effectively.

The Influence of Poland's Subjectivity on *Shades* and its Archive

Poland's work is steeped in subjectivity because of how personal the history is. The attachment and emotions she has for her characters are palpable - even to the point that in 1993, after *Shades* was published, she professed that, "If I don't write another [novel], I really don't care. I've said what I have to say and it was important to me. I love Walter so much that I don't want to leave

[13] Several pictures from these tours can be found in Appendix 1.

him" (Bowles Taylor 20). She mentioned also in the interview how, "I adored the photo, the portrait, of my great-grandfather who was Walter. I used to go up and chat to it when I was little" (Interview). Poland imbues her archive and text with these emotions which give both an extra dimension which would otherwise be unattainable. It is impossible to separate the subjective and objective within Poland's archive and *Shades* as they are so tightly connected. A new avenue of analysis must instead be opened to assess how Poland's subjectivity often steers the transformation of fact into fiction - or the amalgamation of the factual and fictional.

A major - and especially subjective - influence on Poland's writerly choices in *Shades* is her sense of responsibility in continuing an ancestral legacy by passing on the history which had been passed to her by generations before her. Various sources prove how Poland feels this history is very important and meaningful, but also contentious. In a personal letter to Guy Butler, she wrote:

> Because it was a very personal book – everyone in it was based on someone real and known quite well through family myth – and because I felt such a responsibility about taking liberties with people who could no longer defend themselves and who were, after all, my own 'shades', I had to tread carefully, often tentatively" (Poland "Letter to Guy Butler" 1995)

There are numerous instances where Poland talks about a sense of duty that she felt toward writing the story of her family, though she never speaks of it being a burden. "This whole theology of *Shades* is important to me," she said at one point, "That sense of continuity of belonging, of bringing your immortalities with you. I feel one is an inheritor, not just genetically, but of a whole family thing" (Bowles Taylor 20). Telling the story of her ancestors was also a means for Poland to explore her own identity and beliefs. In her speech at Stirling High School, she explained how, "Within the concept of belonging and especially in terms of some of the characters about which I was writing, I had to explore my own worldview, and the idea of what happens when two cultures meet. In a way [...] I was exploring my own theology" (Poland "Speech to Stirling Pupils" 10).

Poland has spoken often about how her great-great-grandmother, Daisy Brereton, was the initial inspiration for *Shades.* She writes that, "St Matthew's and its story, described through Daisy Brereton's memoir, written when she was an old lady, was the spring from which much of the story came" (Poland "Some Notes" 11). The first and only time Poland met her great-grandmother, Daisy, was when she was four years old. She writes: "'So this is Marguerite,' she had said - that

frail, small woman at whom I had peeped half fearfully, over her eiderdown, aged four. As if she were handing me the baton. To this I brought my research, the language I loved, the worldview, the cosmology and what I simply absorbed by being alive" (Poland "Some Notes" 11). Poland and Daisy in fact share a name - Marguerite is 'daisy' in French - and Poland's retention of that memory of so long ago shows how poignant a moment it was. Her choice to use the words "handing over the baton" is an interesting one as it points towards the sense of responsibility she felt, barely understanding at the age of four, to continue with a storytelling practice which has its roots in mission tradition. It is unusual, however, that Poland did not choose to include Daisy in her acknowledgements. She speaks of her great-grandmother's memoir, but focusses on Charles Taberer and William Brereton to whom she even apologises. Why then did she speak of the two men if she felt that she was 'taking on the baton' from her great-grandmother? After all, Poland spoke previously about how it was the memoir which was the very first spark for *Shades*. Perhaps this is because of the positions of power the two have as the patriarchal 'founding figures'.

Poland's subjectivity simultaneously works to subvert the realisticness of her narrative. The climactic ending of 'Shades' sees the central female character – Frances – sent to the Grahamstown train station "with my love" by Victor, her first paramour (Poland "Shades" 398). There, to her surprise, she meets Walter, the third character in the love triangle and the genuine focus of her love, despite her forced engagement to Victor. Throughout the novel, Victor is portrayed as a narcissistic bully, with his final generous gesture seemingly out of character. When challenged on this, the author, Marguerite Poland, replied that no matter the seeming unlikeliness, that narrative arc had to be completed as Walter and Frances were her great-grandparents and thus had to marry. Poland the fiction writer was being controlled by Poland the historian, whose fictional choices were being determined by her attachment to her family's history - her personal archive. The reality is that Poland appears to avoid portraying her great-uncle as an overtly 'villainous' character. As a result, she imposes an ending for *Shades* which tied in with the broader historical accuracy but which went against the development of Victor in the novel. By generously 'giving' Frances to Walter as the climactic event of the novel, Poland goes against the characteristics of Victor which she has built up through the entirety of *Shades*. Despite his role as 'antagonist' in the novel, in the end Victor is still the victor and family hero. Ultimately, the subversion of Victor's personality reads as something happening behind the scenes which determines the narrative trajectory and characterisation.

Poland tries very hard to detach herself emotionally from Harry Taberer as she is fully aware of his full cooperation and role in the negative impact of black South Africans, but her feelings of familial subjectivity do inevitably slip in. “Because whatever Victor was,” Poland stated, “he is a product of his time and its expectations. He was bred to be the imperialist administrator, the hero: the weight of these expectations were heavy on him” (Poland “Speech to Stirling Pupils” 5). In the same speech, Poland spoke of how:

> [I]n exploring the role of my Victor, my preconceptions – based in family myth of distinction, service and heroism – were changed entirely. And that little valley that I first saw, so long ago, on that shining day, represented not only all that was best of the missionary endeavour, but the seeds too of an awesome and unhappy legacy, one that has pervaded the story of this country ever since (Poland “Speech to Stirling Pupils” 6).

The two different statements show how Poland sways between wanting to take responsibility for the actions of her great-uncle, but also wanting to explain Harry Taberer’s actions.

Poland’s struggle to balance out the two is apparent in the interview, where she states that,. “I’m not very articulate here, but it was very important that I wrote about Victor. I think in terms of *Shades*, I was very aware of in my political awareness then where I was in life that in fact I had a relation who had this incredibly ambiguous history that I somehow needed to explore - to understand and to, in a way, explain and to make reparation for. So, that was the real part of it” (Poland Interview). Her comment of being "not very articulate here” hints at an internal struggle on how to approach the history of her great-uncle. She does not hide that she has struggled to understand him and to come to terms with how her philosophies clash with his actions - and the beliefs of her family. Poland’s comments throughout have shown her self-awareness when it comes to interacting with the history of her great-uncle, but also indicate how her subjectivity and moral struggle in fact proved useful in inspiring Victor as a character and the storyline of *Shades* which follows the rise of the migrant labour system.

When asked if she felt like subjectivity was an obstacle when writing a historical fiction, Poland responded instead that: “I think it made it easier because I had a sense of real belonging to the people that I was writing about. Although I didn’t know great-great-grandpa or great-grandpa, I knew people and loved people very dearly who had known them” (Poland Interview). Poland does not shy away from her subjectivity, but makes a visible effort to not encroach on histories she

feels she does not have license to write. Crispin is in many ways the embodiment of Poland's subjectivity. She stated in the interview that:

> You asked me, in fact, in one of the questions if [Crispin] was just a device within the plot? I suppose in a way he was, but in another way he's in a sense almost the narrator. I could never really see his face. It just…everything, all his conflicts and things like which I wrote about him, I could feel and know and somehow understand. For me, he was in fact a very important character, because in a funny way that I knew him from inside looking at the others - which was where it came from, if you like (Poland Interview).

Crispin is the character whom Poland empathised with the most and her sentimentality towards him gave her the means to engage with the novel and its archive in a much more intimate way. While Poland remarked that "Crispin's attitude towards everything is really the narrator's feeling about the world", Crispin and his ideologies are arguably the embodiment of Poland and her own beliefs (Poland Interview).

Crispin presents a response to the archive and the history it has collected; as a fully fictional character, he is representative of an archive of subjectivity because he inadvertently represents her. Crispin can also be seen as a representation of Poland's great-uncle, Bussy, whom she had a close relationship with. It was from Bussy that she learnt the most about St. Matthew's and the family who had once lived there. Poland writes how, "When I was eleven, knowledge of these things came to me through Bussy, Daisy's second son (Wilfred Leigh Brereton). He was my great uncle and I was always wracked with guilt that I loved him more than my grandfather. It was instant understanding, however, of some emotional and 'homing' spirit that bound us. I listened to his stories "(Poland "Some Notes" 2). Bussy was connected to the natural world, to stories and to history in a very similar way to Poland. "I think it" Poland stated, "was the way he thought of and saw the world - its images, its reference points. I know he gave me much of my vocation: the search for belonging, the reverence for the landscape, the deep interest in a language and the people which I took with me to my writing life" (Poland "Some Notes" 2). Poland does not ever directly state that Crispin was inspired by Bussy, but the similarities between her great-uncle and her are the same similarities Poland has with Crispin. She writes in a letter to Guy Butler in 1995: "*Isivivane* cairns and Virgin Mary's have always been mystical things for me. I am glad they are for you too. I am known to spit on stones and ask clemency – Crispin and I are very muddled up with each other in this regard" (Poland "Letter to Guy Butler").

Her subjectivity makes her deeply invested - her archive is richer for it as well as her novel due to the attention she gave to her characters in particular.

The Use of Subjective Experience in the Archive

Poland at times uses her own experiences as archival material to inspire her writing. For example, Poland's 'pilgrimage' with her mother to St. Matthew's at the age of fifteen was deeply impactful to her personal ideologies and sense of self, and to the decision later to write *Shades*. She describes how, "It was one of those July days which was hot and still and the sky plumbago blue. I remember the white dust covering the tecoma and canary creeper at the side of the road, the flitting bush birds, the far hills, the spur of Thomas Mountain (my Kabousie)" (Poland "Some Notes" 8). Poland shows how she still vividly remembers the experience despite how long ago it was, while her nostalgic tone accentuates the significance of the day.

"I have always called it a shining day," Poland wrote, "I used the term in *Shades* which was born out of that journey" (Poland "Some Notes" 8). She goes on to explain how,

> We went down to the church - a huge double building, the larger wing being juxtaposed with the older, more modest church. It is not a beautiful church, being clad in concrete but it has composing lines. [...] The bricks were made by Charles Taberer and his volunteers. They raised it by hand, Charles working from the plans alone as the architect was too far away to help. I knew none of this then (Poland "Some Notes" 8).

As a child, Poland would not have known the complexity of mission history and the double-edged sword it wielded. At that point, the familial histories and hagiography of ancestral figures would have been filtered - as she says, "I did not understand poverty then, I had no notion of political theory" (Poland "Some Notes" 8). However, she makes sure to mention her embarrassment about never thinking of the input of other unnamed labourers who helped Charles build a church he would have otherwise never been able to complete himself. Accordingly, Poland does not focus solely on an idealised moment. She instead superimposes the present onto the past - the nostalgic, happy memory now including a darker awareness. Nevertheless, Poland maintains that that visit to St. Matthew's, "was a beacon moment in my life. The sheer love of being alive and in this place of complete newness and perfect belonging" (Poland "Some Notes" 8)

Poland's trip to St. Matthew's in 2002 with her close friend, Sue Ross, is another noteworthy experience because of the lasting effect it had on Poland and her connection to St. Matthew's. Her visit, she writes, "coincided with the day that an activist and exile, Dr Njobe, came home after the ANC [African National Congress] was unbanned. He was welcomed triumphantly by the community. I heard, for the first time, 'Nkosi Sikelele Africa' sung by a congregation of a thousand in celebration of man returning and a freedom begun" (Poland "Some Notes" 12). Poland describes meeting Njobe in her document, "Some Notes on my Writing", which is notable because she chose not to publish that piece of writing - making it a private recollection. She writes:

> Dr Njobe spoke, an old man returning, remembering, in his exile, this place which was home. Father Christopher Cook, the missionary, asked me to stand and say why I was there. I said I had come to find the shade of my great-great-grandfather, Charles Taberer. Njobe and I stood together: a shared history, unacknowledged and unknown until that moment, fragmented and misinterpreted for over a hundred years. His grandfathers had worked with and been baptised by mine. In the baptismal register the name of his grandmother and my great uncle, Charles and Jane's son, Harry, are almost side by side, christened by Charles Taberer in 1872 (Poland "Some Notes" 13)

Poland was heartened by her experience rather than troubled by any issues that may have arisen because of the complexity socio-politically of her and Njobe's histories. Njobe's return was instead positive, and he celebrated the positive impact the mission had had on his life. Poland and Njobe's histories are intertwined in a way that epitomises Eastern Cape history and the challenges of the present day in how to confront identity and the complexities of the past. "After that, I wrote *Shades* with difficulty but without fear", Poland wrote, as if she had gotten consent to finally write the novel (Poland "Some Writings" 13).

Poland states that ideas for her writing are inspired by experience. "Thinking of the catalyst," Poland writes, "that moment of beginning - of each of my books, it is usually a 'thing' or an event that released the story and let it flow" (Poland "Some Notes" 18). She gives two different anecdotes on how she directly copied an experience she had into her writing. Poland describes a moment she had after catching sight of a gecko. "[T]his" Poland stated, "is where a writer's experience comes in with what they write – I remember going into the bathroom and there was this little gecko on the outside of the window, and I could see its whole tract, and there was a little egg inside it and the little pads on its feet" (Interview). Poland transfers this to *Shades* and gives Walter the experience:

> How the gelatinous geckos ran – little clockwork parts visible against the light of a pane, eyes lustrous with the chase for moths. Once, he had closed one between the window and the frame. He had seen the small foot protruding, the supplicating fingers. He had unlatched the hasp, appalled, and taken the little body in his hand. The delicate white throat had pulsed in death as it had in the quick expectation of life. Blood had squeezed from the minute threads of veins. He'd felt a regret, quite disproportionate to the act (Poland *Shades* 55).

She states that, [T]hat was transferring a moment of specific…an absolute present moment of looking at something and giving that moment – which has caused wonder and happiness, if you like – to one of the characters, even though in that context it was very sad for him" (Interview).

Another experience was from when she had begun writing *The Mantis and the Moon* (1979):

> "I was working quietly beside two year old Susie as she slept (me very pregnant with Verlie) and a huge gravid female mantis plopped down onto the empty page in front of me. It gave me a fright but then I looked at it and it looked at me and we watched each other - both swaying slightly - until it flew off. I wrote: 'There was once a mantis who tried to catch the moon…'" (Poland "Some Notes" 18)

Both the gecko and the praying mantis are commonplace creatures in South African homes and gardens, and coming into contact with them is an experience shared by many - making Poland's interaction with the two a recognisable one to readers. Poland finds these moments very meaningful and symbolic, and associates them with certain points in her life. She explains how:

> "All through my life there have been synchronicities as there are in every life. But because of being a writer, I am particularly aware of them and make the connections. When they happen - not often, but with astonishing clarity - they console and uplift me: they are a sign that what I am doing is the right thing for me. They are rare indeed, but consistent. They are not sought. They come and they transcend. They are intimations of a Presence. A gift from the shades? God-moments? Of course" (Poland "Some Notes" 12)

This extract illustrates how fiction and fact are personally blurred for Poland through her spirituality; this is carried through into *Shades*, where birds, wind and nature are all important motifs and symbols. Like Crispin, Poland's theology is complex and difficult to pinpoint and define other than it is influenced by both Christianity and Xhosa customs.

A Conclusive Theorisation of the Author's Archive

Shades as a novel is itself an archive, a palimpsest of archival and creative matter layered on top of each other to form a narrative. This thesis has used *Shades* as both a literary text and as a catalogue for the novel's archive; the novel therefore provided a series of factual markers made up of historical events, landmarks and Poland's ancestral histories which could be investigated to retrace Poland's sources and help further reconstruct her archive - while helping to distinguish between factual and historical material. Both *Shades* and its reconstructed archive are therefore primary sources for this thesis as both 'texts' were needed to reach the hypothesis that the author's archive can be used to closely analyse the novel.

The archive is inherently subjective and a fiction writer is self-reflectively aware of this while a normal archivist may not be, and so their archive is actually almost better to objectively analyse as it follows a more actively traceable set of rules and systems that govern what information was selected to become part of the archive. Historical fiction is the medium in which the author's archive can be analysed through both a subjective and objective lens - therefore getting full value from the archive. Poland uses 'factual' history that has been manipulated intentionally and unintentionally by her subjectivity. At the same time, she has created a new historical narrative based on fact and informed by fiction. By acknowledging the subjective nature of her writing, this becomes evident.

Poland's personal connection to the material in her archive fundamentally alters *Shades*'s archive and the literary text. Through the inherent subjectivity, the archive is reshaped and requires a reassessment by analysing how Poland's subjectivity ironically leads to a truthful storytelling and interaction with the material she is subjective toward. In the same way that all archives will carry a certain subjectivity, Poland knows her archive is subjective and that her contribution to the historical fiction canon as well as to a degree the historical archive has been influenced by this subjectivity. When comparing the archive to the creative work through close analysis, there are certain factors that emerge: firstly, an understanding of the archive and its limitations; secondly, the value of subjectivity in the creative process; thirdly, how the personal creation and subsequent self-examination of a new archive create a new discourse that affects the conceptualisation of the historical archive and its purpose in creative writing.

Conclusion

Reconstructing and analysing the archive that informed the writing of Marguerite Poland's *Shades* has enabled the investigation of how fact and fiction can be put together to rewrite historical narratives. Through her personalisation of history, Poland both problematises and explores the role her family has played in the history of South Africa. Her choice to use Eastern Cape history as the foundation of her archive means that the reader is shocked back into history and lulled back to the now, led by the narrative she spins. The relationship between fiction and history therefore allows the reader to be read back into history and then forward into fiction. Factuality and subjectivity are both driving forces in the text and both spurred Poland's determination to create a story that encapsulated the history of the Eastern Cape through the lens of her familial history and legacy. This thesis has specifically considered the relationship between author and text by looking at the archive which connects them, and argued how an historical fiction author can utilise their own self-produced literary archive to create a text. It has shown that this idea extends over into the research process for academia - where the analysis of a text requires the researcher to first build a collection of research to support the arguments that they make.

In *Shades,* Poland pairs the familiar and accessible with the inaccessible. The novel is a depiction of a specific period in Eastern Cape history which means that any reader fairly knowledgeable about South African history will be able to recognise the general historical events and settings that appear in the novel. The novel's setting is also based on tangible non-fiction, since Poland fully situates her novel in the geography of Eastern Cape by mentioning settlements like Grahamstown, Queenstown, East London and Kleinemond. These are recognisable places - towns and locations that readers can find on a map or may even live in. The general historical narrative that is adhered to is therefore familiar, while the setting itself is familiar, but Poland's embellishments bring in a sense of unknown. Her ancestral history dominates the novel's narrative because of her choice to base the majority of the main characters on past family members - chiefly the love triangle which is the basis of the plotline. Characters like Benedict act as historical signifiers with the specific history they represent like the geographical locations anchor *Shades* to factuality. On the other hand, characters such as Walter, Frances and Father Charles are all direct representations of Poland's own ancestors and are wholly unfamiliar historical figures to the reader despite their factuality. Accordingly, Poland does not only play around with fiction and fact in the

development of her characters, but uses the combination to subvert the history central to *Shades* in a way that suits her narrative and intentions. Poland constructs a novel which challenges the reader's understanding of history by selecting a wide variety of historical material, combining them in her archive and then narrativising them by inserting them into the novel.

Ultimately, it was Poland's family who inspired her the most, and it was mainly for them that she wrote *Shades*. They were not just distant figures from the stories told to her by her mother and great-uncle while growing up, but people whom she had made her own by writing them into her novel. Poland believes that she always retains a connection to the historical figures the characters represent no matter how much the character alters from the original. "So that thing of being connected to what I'm writing, even if I'm fictionalising it," she argues "I still have the sense of the real person and the real history and what that person means to me, and also the fact of what that person needs, because they're mine in a way and need to be respected" (Poland Interview). Referring to Victor, she writes, "So in fact, he wasn't all bad and, you know, he redeemed himself in a sense in the end. And I didn't want to have clear-cut heroes and villains and things like that. Because people aren't like that. And because I also had a sense of responsibility towards him because he's also mine" (Poland Interview). Poland directly claims Victor not only because he represents a family member, but because he has become so familiar to her.

She could never truly avoid not redeeming Victor in some small way, but she could show the repercussions of his actions by sacrificing Crispin - the embodiment of Poland in *Shades*. In a speech she gave for the Sandton Readers Group in 2002, Poland gives an example of how she has had to go back and question previous assumptions she had unknowingly made earlier in her life. Poland described how:

> [Harry Taberer] and his brother and sisters grew up to do brave and splendid things and he himself was so important I was told - family myths again - that 10 000 mine workers went to his funeral. I was shown the written record of the Xhosa praise poem that had been recited for him at his graveside. It was believed that some old chap at the mission had composed it: it took three years in Xhosa Literature at university for the penny to drop that the writer was S.E.K. Mqhayi, one of the greatest Xhosa poets of the century. To our shame, we were all too preoccupied with great-uncle and his supposed grandeur to acknowledge things like that (Poland "Sandton Readers Speech").

Poland realised that she had been unconsciously complacent in perpetuating the dismissal of the contributions made by black South Africans. With Victor playing an important role in

Shades, she had to directly address Harry Taberer and his contributions to a system of oppression while juggling with her personal feelings to a man who was a hero to her family. Her memory of realising her blind acceptance and her embarrassment are important indicators of Poland's active self-awareness and act as an example that shows the automatic exclusionary mindset the dominant historical narratives have perpetuated. Poland's ability to identify her skewed interpretations - even subsequent to the fact - and ability to acknowledge them reveal a continuous vigilance on her part to understand how she may be emotionally manipulated by her personal attachment.

Poland has been very open about how she used her ancestral history for inspiration and that several of her characters portray certain family members. However, information on Poland's private ancestral history is largely inaccessible without purposefully making contact with Poland for more information. This means that there is an ambiguity around what is fact and what is fiction because the reconstruction of Poland's archive has been limited and therefore restricts close analysis. Comprehensively retracing and reconstructing Poland's archive has only been achieved through a direct interaction with Poland via email and through the interview that was held. This experience has shown how in the case of there being limited material on the novel being analysed, contacting the author in question was essential to being able to rebuild their archive and therefore being able to use the archive to analyse the novel. The practicability of using the author's archive to analyse a literary text is dependent on how much of an archive exists in the public domain and whether the author is accessible to the researcher and willing to provide access to their private archive.

On several occasions, Poland has explained how each book she writes provides inspiration for the next. "In a way," she said, "*Shades* and *A Sin of Omission* - every book that I've ever written - kind of slots into the one before it in a way. Somewhere in that book is the seed of the next one" (Poland Interview). She describes how, "It's a strange kind of weaving of a carpet, if you like, with all these threads coming down, and it's which thread you pick up next to carry on. So everything that I write is always related to what went before" (Poland Interview). Poland's explanations of how each book she writes provides the ideas which inspire her next novel show a similarity to how the Archive inspires the creation of new material based on the old. The way Poland's novels are

interconnected because of the inspiration they provide Poland for future novels therefore mimics the cyclical nature of the archive.

"Bussy once wrote me a letter," Poland writes, "He started it with, 'And here is Chapter One', and then, 'And here is Chapter Two'. it was as if he was giving me the map into writing *Shades*. A map into the rest of my writing life" (Poland "Some Notes" 9). Bussy gave her an archive - not only of stories, but memories and feelings - to the point where she felt nostalgia as a child for a place she had never been to. Bussy, Marguerite and Crispin all sit between two different worlds, able to see the problems in each but also able to relay the stories of both sides. Poland's manipulation of history can be seen through Benedict especially, with her reconstruction of such a representative figure. He is how *Shades* is made the most believable because he is a likable character whose lack of choice forces him to undergo challenges, ultimately evoking sympathy in readers. Her interpretations of history are obvious when analysing the creative choices she made in *Shades*. However, the extent of these creative choices can only be analysed by knowing how and in what way the historical narratives in her text differ from those in the South African archive, versus what narratives are in fact products of her archive that have been enhanced by fiction.

In *Shades*, and Poland's historical fiction work in general, the archive is ultimately used as a tool to mould and adapt history to suit a particular narrative that is based on subjectivity and fictionality and informed by the factual. Poland chooses to creatively manipulate her family's lives rather than the historical record to preserve the integrity of the history she works with. Therefore, while history is manipulated, it is not overtly changed and she uses fiction to cover any gaps the archive could not fill. Subjectivity directly impacts her fiction, but goes no further when it comes to potentially disrupting historical fact than the selection of what information to use. Her interpretations of history are therefore made through fiction and substantiated by fact. The concept of investigating and reconstructing the author's archive to analyse the author's novel extends past just *Shades* and Poland's utilisation of the novel. It opens up interesting prospects for potential research that questions the role archives play in the creation of historical fiction and how an author's subjectivity can in fact provide useful contributions to the relationship between archive and novel. Additionally, there are potential opportunities in assessing the expansion of the archive and its conventions through the formalisation of intersecting archives which were produced from a variety of different knowledge bases and literary production.

Poland discusses in her document, “Some Notes on my Writings”, how:

> I had to explore the events, issues and ideologies which shaped this country and that watershed in its history; the plethora of legislation which disempowered black people; the debates on the role of missionaries; the South African War and rinderpest pandemic and, most important, the establishment of the migrant labour system which changed the shape of black South African society so tragically and irrevocably (Poland “Meet the Author” 18).

Her explanation of her research process makes it clear that she felt she could not approach incorporating the general history that informs *Shades* without proper, comprehensive research into Xhosa history, traditions and culture. In this extract, she also uses emotive words such as “watershed”, “tragically” and “irrevocably” which suggest a subjective reaction and mindset to this history - as well as the roles her ancestors played (Poland “Meet the Author” 18). Her ancestors would of course have been affected - whether majorly or minorly - by these different events and her choice of words points towards a combination of emotion towards her family and the troubles they faced as well as a response to the immorality of Xhosa repression in South Africa.

Freud states that, “A piece of creative writing, like a day-dream, is a continuation of, and a substitute for, what was once the play of childhood” (Freud 139). Poland has been writing stories her entire life, starting from when she was a child when she had written about St. Matthew’s and her great-grandmother. The acts of writing and of amassing material in an archive are therefore two activities Poland had inadvertently been doing way before she wrote *Shades*. *Shades* has ultimately been part of her since she met her great-grandmother at the age of four because of the ancestral history that is fundamental to the novel. Instead of impeding the writing of historical fiction that is concerned with the factual account of several historical narratives, her emotional connection to the novel bolstered the factual aspects of *Shades* because she used fiction to tie factual history together. The analysis of *Shades* and its archive has ultimately shown how both subjectivity and objectivity must be examined with equal care for a comprehensive and effective analysis.

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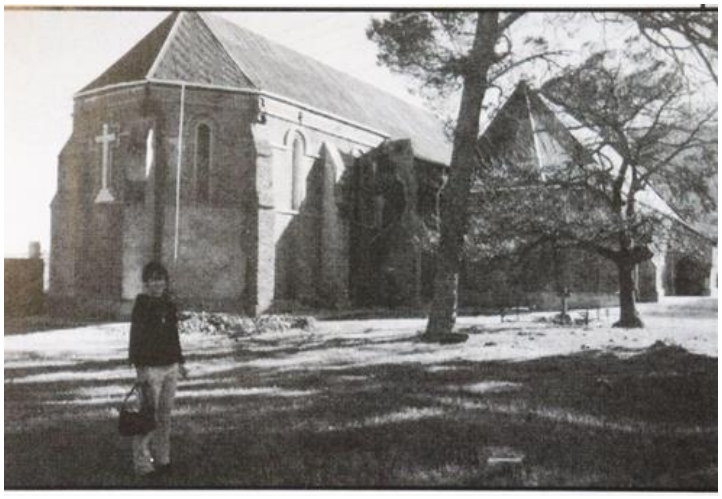
Appendices

Appendix 1: Photos of the St. Matthew's mission station.

Appendix 1(a): Rear side of the church (2024)

Appendix 1(b) Poland standing at the rear side of the church (1999)

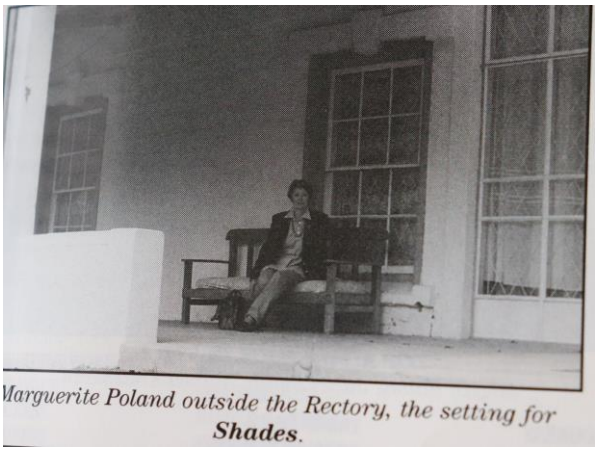


Appendix 1(c): The St. Matthew's church foundation stone laid in 1876 by Reverend Charles Taberer and Jane Taberer [2023]

Appendix 1(d): Front of church [2023]

Appendix <u>1(e):</u> 'Crispin's' grave [2023].

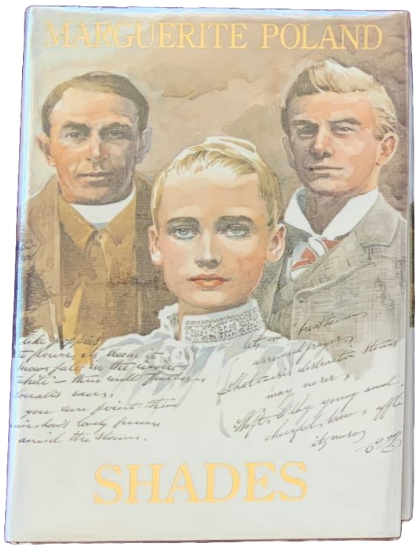
Appendix <u>1(f)</u>: Photo of Marguerite sitting on the mission house porch [1997].



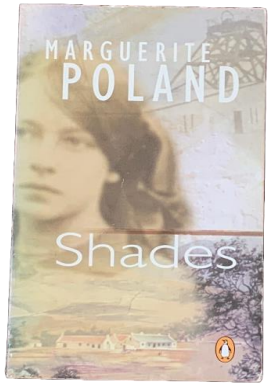
Marguerite Poland outside the Rectory, the setting for ***Shades****.*

Appendix <u>1(g)</u>: Mission house porch [2023].

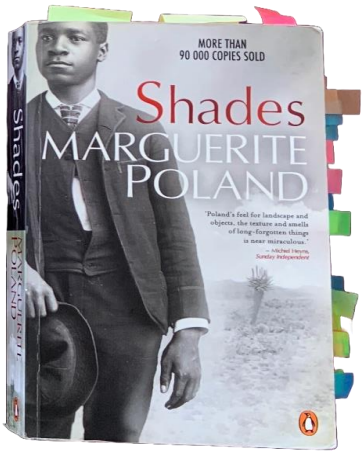
Appendix 2: Covers of *Shades*



1993 1st Edition Cover



1994 2nd Edition Cover



2012 3rd Edition Cover

Appendix 3: Interview with Dr. Marguerite Poland, 17 April 2023[14]

E: I've been so excited that you've been happy to chat with me. I don't think a lot of people can talk to the authors of the books they are writing their Master's on.

M: Well, I'm all ears and I'll try to do the best I can and if I don't explain myself properly, just call me out. Okay. Fantastic.

E: I spent a lot of time at Amazwi/NELM and it was fascinating because of the whole pile of stuff they had on you and your work. Something I read was your original manuscripts – or at least one of them. I found that when I compared the final copy and the manuscript you had omitted certain historical indicators. Benedict was, if I remember correctly, the nephew of Sandile originally. You also talk about the men 'leftover' from the Cattle-killing. That doesn't really appear in the final copy.

M: Well, I hate to tell you that a lot of that was ignorance because when I started writing *Shades*, I had been a children's writer up till then. I was a writer of children's books and I had written one novel, but I was not a historian. I did anthropology, of course. So, a lot of that history was not known to me.

I had dabbled at that stage and I think had I written *Shades* now, I probably wouldn't have said that about Sandile. But that said, I did know about the Cattle-killing because I had, as you know, read Jeff Peires's book and people like that. Sandile's people had all been removed from the Amatholas and sent across the Great Kei, and a lot of them, because of the Cattle-killing, gave their children to missionaries.

I also knew that Sandile's children had been sent elsewhere to be educated. In other words, that whole thing about George Grey taking the children of the elite and having them educated I covered

[14] The transcribed interview has been edited for better coherency.

in *A Sin of Omission*. So, I was aware of those things, but not in the depth that I should have been perhaps.
In a way, Benedict is a construct, and I know you'll ask questions later about whether he was a real person or not, but he wasn't really. I'd worked with so many people on surveys for the Institute for Social Research that he was sort of an amalgamation of people that I knew and the kind of attitudes that they might have had – as well as reading people like Charles van Onselen and Tim Couzen's works, which is historical.

So, he was not a character based on someone specific. He was more of a construct. But as far as the historical markers are concerned, the Sandile one was probably a mistake as it wasn't as developed as it should have been. And as I said, that really was ignorance on my part at that stage. You must remember that this is well over 25 years ago. It is 30 years. I can't quite believe it.

E: So, the next question is around what your research process was sort of leading up to the book?

P: Well, where I got the idea was from when a cousin of mine sent me my great granny's memoir, and I know that you've seen part of it. I mean, it's a very light memoir – let's put it that way. She was pretty old when she wrote it. I think it was just one or two scenes in that because I had been to St Matthew's as well with my mum when I was 15, so I could visualise what she was writing about because I'd been there. So, it meant more to me than it might have meant to somebody else in the family who'd never been to St Matthew's. Also, at that stage, I was really interested in ecology and wildlife and history and that sort of thing. So, when I read Granny's diary, which was after the children's books and the first novel, I thought, 'There's a wonderful story here'.

I think that was the first spark. But then obviously when she was talking about the missionaries and things, I had to go into proper research about that, and that is what I did. I spent a lot of time in Cory, and I spent a lot of time in the Killie Campbell Museum in Durban. I don't know if you know it – it's part of the University of Natal.

It's the same, you know, with historical stuff – a lot of anthropology and a lot of mission material. But I have to say to you, Emily, that at that point in my career, I was not a good researcher in that I was very bad at keeping track of references and things like that, which I have improved on since. If it had been an academic work, obviously it would've been approached differently.

And straight after *Shades*, I did go back. I did go back to academic work because I then started my PhD. So, in fact, that was when I realised how *loskop* I had been about keeping the reference for *Shades*. Does that answer your question?

E: Yes, it does. So, I mean, this ties into what you were saying that the narrative was made by ancestral documents. What then was the balance between fictional and factual?

P: I think it started off more fictional and then became more factual as I got into the story, obviously, because the more research I did the more ideas and knowledge and links came to me of where to go next and how to do it. I was very careful with my research – the mining, the recruiting, you know in the second section of the book, which was about Johannesburg. I did a lot of research into church history and things like that. So as far as the historical part – the establishment of the mines, the recruiting, the Cattle-killing – all of that was carefully researched. I knew that that was very important, as far as the family's concerned, and I was thinking about that this morning.

I was deeply aware of my own family history because my mother had always talked to me about it, and my great-uncle Val told me so much about the mission station when I was a teenager. So, I had this real sense of belonging. To that family and that history and that place, and also because I was brought up in the Eastern Cape. It meant something to me. One has an absolute sense of place because of that kind of upbringing.

So, the people in a sense were very well known to me, but I had to juggle, because, in reality, Victor was Frances's brother. She had a very special person that she had met when she was at boarding school, who was the real love of her life, but I couldn't have two strapping cricket-playing heroes. So I had to make a choice there. And because Victor was a very important character in terms of fact, he had to become, you know, the love interest. He had to become the villain here, the fallen hero – all of those things. The real Victor I did a lot of research into.

I'd known about him all my life because the family used to be so terribly proud of him. I was not, because he was the architect of the migrant labour system. So, when I started writing, when I started doing the research, my mother already wasn't a great admirer of him because she'd been a member of Black Sash and things like that right from the beginning. So, her political views were very different from other members of the family. Harry Taberer, whom Victor is based on, was very much a man of his time. He was a sporting hero. He was good-looking. He was all of those things. He was as I imagined Victor, but he chose to do this thing which was so different from in fact his upbringing and his father and his religion. And, I mean, so many of the early recruiters and soldiers and things were men of their time and came from possibly the same background and then subverted it, if you like.

I'm not very articulate here, but it was very important that I wrote about Victor. I think in terms of *Shades*, I was very aware in my political awareness then where I was in my life that in fact, I had a relation who had this incredibly ambiguous history that I somehow needed to explore – to understand and to, in a way, explain and to make reparation for. So, that was the real part of it. Father Charles I based very carefully on my great-great-grandfather, who is perhaps the most realistic person in the book. I adored the photo, the portrait, of my great-grandfather who was Walter. I used to go up and chat to it when I was little, and I also knew from my mum that she loved him dearly and that he told the most wonderful stories. So, the kind of personality I gave him was very much as I'd been told. You know, how he was when my mum was little and he was her grandpa.

So, there's a lot of fiction in terms of what, say, Frances and Victor and Crispin and everybody did. But it's very much in the spirit of what I knew of my family, how they spoke about them, the letters that were written, Granny's memoir, and of course "Gerald Bussy" – my great-uncle who told me about the mission to start with. That, I think, is the real spark of my interest.

E: Going along the lines of that, did you feel at times that you were constricted by the facts of your family ancestry?

P: I was constricted by the facts about the really historical things, obviously, because one had to be as accurate as possible – and we'll get onto it in another question. Being white, middle class – all of those things – I had to be incredibly careful because I am very aware that apprehending other people's history is a hugely sensitive subject and one that I have never been cavalier about, I hope, and especially since *Shades* was written, because one has a huge responsibility. One needs to have a huge responsibility – a real sensitivity – to where one could be patronising, condescending, or inaccurate. You know, you just can't…you can't do that. So, I had to be very careful about that. But as far as the actual narrative is concerned, a lot of the things that happen in *Shades* really did happen. You know, like Hector – Hector the horse. That was true. The war games. That was true. Victor's father and the Missoula war, that was true. All of that. I used those hooks, if you'd like, to then imagine how the people responded to those things. With the Pumani brothers, I knew of that incident where people were shot at the station. That was absolutely true. They obviously weren't there, but I put them there. The story is true and I fictionalised it by making them part of that incident. I'm just trying to think of another one…Victor going to Grahamstown and things like that. The station, Victor running down there; Brompton and his musical box. That wasn't true, but I saw pictures of a little mission that was so isolated in the hills. I could just imagine somebody there, and when I saw a photograph in the album of a chap, I just knew that was Brompton. So, it's just some spark that sort of ignites an image or a story or something like that.

I have to say that I know that I can't get away from writing about missionaries, but I think that my worldview understands the concept of *Shades* and likes it because of that feeling of continuity between one going back. It just gives one a sense of belonging and meaning, and Crispin's attitude towards everything is really the narrator's feeling about the world. You asked me, in fact, in one of the questions if he was just a device within the plot? I suppose in a way he was, but in another way, he's in a sense almost the narrator. I could never really see his face. It just…everything, all his conflicts and things like which I wrote about him, I could feel and know and somehow understand. For me, he was in fact a very important character, because I felt in a funny way that I knew him from the inside looking at the others – which was really where it came from, if you like.

E: He's an incredible character. I remember actually crying when I read about his death for the first time, and then again subsequently. It's not often that a book makes me cry.

M: I must say that writing that part was very different and one of my favourite. You asked for a favourite passage. I never read my books again, by the way, after they've been published, but this time I have to say it is Crispin's burial at the end with the hymn. That's one of the passages of when he's buried that was important to me. And also because at St Matthew's – I don't know if you ever went there?

E: I am planning to go this December. I think you'd find it sad because it's changed so much since the first time that you were there.

M: I was just going to say that writing the burial of Crispin – outside the church, and you'll see it, there's a little grave. It's the only one that's close by to the church. In fact, it would've been Frances's littlest brother who was buried there. A real child. I think it was seeing that little grave a long, long time ago and wondering who this little chap was. His name was Frances Taberer and that's Crispin's grave. In a way, when I got to St Matthew's and visited it, I knew who was there in a sense, and it's him.

E: I'll definitely look out for him.

M: If you find it, you can put a flower on it for me.

E: So, you've actually basically answered my next question of Benedict being representative of a certain history. In terms of that, what sources did you turn to for knowledge of culture, customs and traditions?

M: When I was in grade 10, I asked the nuns at school if I could do Xhosa for matric, and they thought I was out of my mind. There wasn't anyone to teach me. Bussy – my great-uncle who had spoken it obviously from the time he was born because he was brought up at St Matthew's – just said to me, you learn if you want to. To really understand what it means to live here, to be a South

African, you have to learn an African language. We're talking about the 1960s here, so that was quite sort of off the wall in a way for then, and that stayed with me. You know, what he said to me, the stories he told me about St Matthew's, just obviously made this wonderful feeling that had to be explored.

When I got to university, my marks and everyone said that I must do English and History. While I did do English, I didn't do history which in fact was my favourite subject at school. I just knew that I had to do Xhosa and obviously the subject that went well with that was anthropology. I just have to tell you that when I got to third year and I had to choose my majors, I asked my prof if I could do Xhsoa and Drama because I thought they would go well together, and no one had ever heard of such a combination. It even went to the Senate, and they said don't be outlandish, nobody's asked for that. I mean, there must be hundreds who do it now. Anthro was only a two-year major so I could do that as my other major. I was taught by Professor Hammond-Tooke, who is long gone now, but he collaborated with me on my book, *The Abundant Herd*, He was my professor of anthropology and he was absolutely wonderful and fascinating, and just so stimulating, and he'd done the most amazing work amongst the Barclay and ????

He also just inspired me and he took an interest in me because I was doing Xhosa as well. So, I completely immersed myself in that when I was at Rhodes. When it came to the customs and traditions and things, I had the resources to know where to look for the work. I'll send a list to you of the books that were available. Would you like that?

E: Yes, please!

M: Of course. There has been so much written since, you know. The kind of history that I did at school was just outrageous. It was so completely skewed and embarrassing. You were taught a quite different history. What I was taught and the whole thing of the writing of South Africa has really only blossomed properly in the last short while.

What I had access to was not great. You know, one didn't have the people to ask for the right links. I mean, obviously, there are some wonderful older histories, but the whole way of writing, the

whole way of looking at it, has changed. And when I wrote *Shades*, the new history was starting to be published and developed with a different sort of bias and a different way of dealing with it. So, I was coming in, in a sense, both as an amateur, but also at a time when history was changing a lot. I had access to new stuff, but not as much as I had, let's say, for writing *A Sin of Omission*.

You know, there's been so much written since that time, you know, since 1994. There has been so much more written.

E: Yes, definitely. I mean, I found it interesting looking for books on specifically Eastern Cape history and a lot of them were out of print. It's this weird thing where there's a lot that has been written about it, but at the same time, it's difficult to find certain books.

Our Zoom is threatening to end in about 10 minutes. Can I resend the link? Can you continue?

M: Yes, of course you can. That's absolutely fine. When you go away, I'll stay here.

E: Just click on the link again that I sent in the email and that should take you back.

M: Ask me another question before you disappear.

E: How personal is your archive? My whole idea is that you created this personal archive – do you feel like it should be made available to the public? There's a certain amount of information at Amazwi, but I am interested also in what you kept – if you're open to talking about it.

M: I'd be genuinely interested to see what is in NELM because I can't remember. I hope you find quite a lot, and I'm sure you'll find a lot of chaos. If you can read my handwriting, I'm impressed. The nuns at school thought it was appalling and it is. I think I just wanted to get rid of this stuff, so I sent it to NELM because they had taken all my children's stories and manuscripts. Now I'm much more aware of how important it is to keep records and to organise it, and to organise it on the computer as well. I think I know mostly because now I've been working for St. Andrews on their history.

Since then, I've become incredibly interested in the Anglican Institution, which was part of St. Andrews, which was the black elite school, like the one in Cape Town. They've needed that material and they've needed that research for their own purposes, and I'm the only one that's going to do it. So, I've been very much more careful in archiving than with *Shades*.

I think it was pretty chaotic because I was, one must understand, writing a novel. At that stage, I had no idea that anybody would, A, publish it or B, want the material that was left over. So the fact that it's there, it was more or less a dumping ground. But the fact is that it's being used by you and I know Mark Jacobs used it, and I know that people have used it who have been writing workbooks for *Shades* when it became a matric set work. So, I'm very glad that it's available. I have no fearful secrets that I don't want anybody to see. So, whatever is there, is, if someone wants to use it that's great, and I'm pleased that you did.

In a way, *Shades* and *A Sin of Omission* – every book that I've ever written – kind of slots into the one before in a way. Somewhere in that book is the seed of the next one. I mean, you'll remember the passage from *Shades* where right at the beginning Walter sees the boys fishing for eels, Benedict, Victor and Crispin, in the water furrow. That comes from a picture that I've got in an old family album. But, in fact, one of the characters in that picture is in my next book, which was *Iron Love*. That picture and album that was sent to me when I was writing *Shades*, for pictures for *Shades*, and was actually Charlie Fraser's album.

So, that led to the idea of the next book, and from there it went onto Stephen in *A Sin of Omission.* It's a strange kind of weaving of a carpet, if you like, with all these threads coming down, and it's which thread you pick up next to carry on. So, everything that I write is always related to what went before. Are you about to disappear?

E: Five more minutes! Why the use of Corelli in particular? Because that's a motif that comes up with Frances and Walter. Is it just a piece that you liked particularly?

P: I just love that piece of music, and when I write I always play music. It somehow just, I don't know if you do that, but it somehow sort of sets a tone of what you're doing. When we went to England, we went to a concert somewhere, and Baroque music was played, and I just loved it. So, I bought a Corelli disc and that piece of music just haunted me. In fact, it's not really a piece for the piano, but it went somewhere between sadness and being old and being not too difficult, and just being memorable. It's like the hymns that I chose for *Shades*, like "All Creatures of my God and King", which I have at Crispin's funeral.

I played quite a lot of hymns in fact, because it gave the sense of the mission. I remember I was writing and this particular hymn came on and I just thought, 'That's the one'. So, it's things that I love, and every book I've ever written is always associated with a particular piece of music. In *Shades*, it's the Corelli.

E: I remember in one of the interviews that you gave you described how you find it very difficult to let go of character at the end of books, which I thought was quite beautiful.

P: My dear, dear Emily, I have to tell you that I talk to them all the time. Once my child, who was about eight at the time said, "Who are you talking to? Why aren't you talking to me?", and she was quite right and was very bad. But, you know when, just for example, writing the history of St. Andrews, the people that I was writing about, especially from the first 50 years of the school, became so intensely real to me that I just knew them. I can recognise them in photos instantly, even if they're far away.

With Stephen, from *A Sin of Omission*, these weird coincidences kept happening which were peculiar. I'm very practical, but there was a sense of something happening, and you just think, yes. Like, the thing about the boy brides in *Shades* – I did a lot of research on that.

But after I published the book, I came across a very obscure article about that, which was written by Victor – the real one – and it was really, incredibly insightful, and I thought – is he telling me something? Is he there? And another incident that is not in *Shades*. I love Charlie Fraser who was my grandpa, and actually Father Charles's grandson as well. I wrote the book and, um, it was used

at St Andrew's as a setwork for standard 9. The guys all had to write a poem about somebody who was featured in the school's clock tower. Their names are there from the First World War, and this one chap chose the name Charles Fraser and didn't know anything about him.

The teacher sent me the poems and that particular poem was written at five o'clock on the 11th of March, 1998. and Charles Fraser was killed at five o'clock on the 11th of March, 1916. Now, that just to me was…I didn't ask for that. He didn't ask for that. It just happened, and that's happened so many times.

E: I was interested in your relationship with Guy Butler, because it came up quite a bit in the stuff that I was researching, because he's quite a controversial figure.

M: Well, it seems so. I mean, when I was at Rhodes, he wasn't. But I'm pretty ancient. And he was… I know he's controversial and I know that there was some sort of… wasn't there a seminar where people really vilified him and talked about racism and all the rest of the things?

E: I'm not entirely sure but it's a mixed one.

M: He taught me in 1968, 1969, so it's a long time ago but he was seen as not particularly a conservative person at all at Rhodes at that time. But you know, that doesn't say much. And he was a wonderful teacher. I also did Drama with him. He directed me in a couple of plays when I was at Rhodes. And he also launched *Train to Doringbult* which was my first adult novel. He was a guy who'd been brought up in the Karoo, went through the Second World War, you know; he was a man of that time and he was a great teacher. I didn't have contact with him after the launch of the *Train to Doringbult* book, which was in the 1980s. So, all this controversy about him and about NELM and all the rest of it has been a much more recent thing. And academics… Do you know what that academic debate is actually? I don't - I'm not very clear about it all. I'm quite sad because he was a lovely man and a kind man.

E: And a lot of the origins; there are some very big things that he initiated, so well known, like, if I'm not mistaken, the festival.

M: Yes, that's right. He did a whole bunch of different things. Looked very wide. Yeah, I think he'd be terribly sad to know what had happened. In a way, he was a very gracious, nice man. And he taught me and he taught me well.

E: Sure. So do you think that you created an archive? My whole notion of creating this information on which you based your book?

M: Well, I don't think that any serious archivist would be very pleased with me. I'm very bad at making… at that stage, particularly, I was very bad at doing references properly. I think it is an archive. I hope that you have found it not too frustrating an archive because there are gaps in it, obviously. Mm-hmm… but, you know, since then, writing the book about cattle - because that was a proper academic work - I had to have my footnotes correct and I had to have my referencing correct. So that, I know, is a reasonably good archive. With *A Sin of Omission* I'd say that I really did have an archive. Now, and certainly the book about St. Andrews - that work was properly archived. And so I have learned. But I think during the writing of *Shades* I couldn't ever have visualized that the material would be used, or be of any use. So, I didn't do anything particularly methodical with it. I just was very aware that my story, the historical parts of the story, had to be correct. But I didn't think anybody would delve into where exactly that piece of informational material came from. Which is probably the frustration for you now.

E: Yes and no. Because if there aren't any answers to something it means something.

M: Well, I wasn't taking it that seriously. I was just writing a story because I really wanted to, and then the fact that it became a setwork and that it started being analysed. It was only once it became a setwork that I had to actually really think about being able to answer questions so that students could write their papers on it. I have belief in the integrity of the work I do because it was written with a huge commitment to the story that I was creating, the people that I was creating - because they had links with real people who belonged to me - as well as the history because of my

own beliefs and my own education. It had to be accurate. And also the sense of being aware that one did not appropriate; having done the proper research or having respect and knowledge for it. But I didn't ever think that I'd be standing up in front of schools and talking about it or having to answer to people who disagreed or didn't like it or criticized it in various ways. I think I didn't have belief in myself that making an archive was going to be important.

E: It's interesting because there are reviews and Master's and PhD dissertations, but there isn't all that much stuff… I can use the fact that there isn't much and I can use the stuff that's in there. It was actually something that one of the lecturers said in my proposal presentation – 'How weighted is the interview? Can you actually write this as a thesis using the interview?' So, I'm very happy that you've been happy to have this interview.

M: Well, it's been wonderful for me because I haven't thought about it much since writing *Shades* and we're talking nearly 30 years ago now. I've been a career writer since then, so obviously one develops with every work, from the first *Mouse with No Whiskers* that I wrote when I was at Rhodes when I was 18. You know, it's been a continual learning process for me. You asked me if I had a regret…I'm regretful that I didn't do history as well because I would've had better tools when I started. But what I did have – and I think what has been for me the most important thing - is that I had the language and the love of it, and the appreciation of course. And that has been ongoing, you know, and all the work that I've done has in some way reflected back to that particular field that I chose and path that I took.

E: So why did you ultimately choose historical fiction? And not just a history?

M: I think because of the writing. I'm not that analytical and I've written poems and stories ever since I could actually write, and you know, that's the sort of mindset I have. But because of my training, like you, for example, my Master's was on the structure of folklore, fairy tales and things like that in Zulu. I'm very aware of the fact that one must do your research very carefully. I wanted to write. I wanted to explore my shades with the story of shades in my first book, *The Train to Doringbult.* My love of the Eastern Cape and the experiences that I had were very much part of that. I've written a book called *Recessional for Grace*. I don't know if you know it, but that had to

do with what it meant to write a book, what it was like finding places, what it was like creating characters and the research was part of that. I think that probably the most telling thing is that when I did my PhD I used to put a verse from a poem on the top of each chapter, and my professor said, 'For God's sake, we are not writing novels or poetry. We are doing an academic study'. And, you know, I think I said – *Recessional for Grace*, well, what about beauty? And the thing is that when you are writing a novel, you can observe in a different way from if you're writing history. But history has always… I mean, I read history now all the time. It's the thing I find most interesting, I read more nonfiction than fiction. In fact, much more. I wanted to write people's feelings as well. And if you're writing straight history, you're not allowed to do that, because you have to stick to the facts or to a theme or to a hypothesis, or to whatever. When I wrote *A Sin of Omission*, there wasn't enough material. I would've liked to have written a biography of Stephen but there simply wasn't material because, again - and this is an archival thing and I said it in the introduction to the book – that archivists decide in their time what they're going to archive. For example, so much of what the black students wrote has disappeared, but what their teachers wrote or what the society propagated or the gospel wrote or whatever is the stuff, or the more senior white missionaries is the stuff that's preserved. And the other has been lost, set aside, you know, just discarded. Especially in South Africa, I'm sure this is true, because of the bias in history and because of the black/white bias so much has been lost. And also, writing a biography again is constraining because you have to stick to the facts. And they just…they just weren't there. They aren't there.

E: Yeah, I've definitely been dealing with that, looking at the South African archive in general and how it's very weighted because of that. And how do we sort of find out the histories of those who have been, like you said, described 'sort of'? Is there a way of doing that? And then thirdly, that created history…. or created history of writing something that is fictional, that is really a history. And if that's a method? We talked about this at the beginning, but I'm personally dealing with the amount of subjectivity with this material. Did you find that dealing with the first level made it easier or more difficult to write to?

M: No, I think it made it easier because I had a sense of real belonging to the people that I was writing about. Although I didn't know great-great grandpa or great-grandpa, I knew people and loved people very dearly who had known them. So I think that was really important. Again, it

comes back to that *Shades* thing, like in writing about Stephen and Yakama. I keep going back to that, but it's my most recent work and it's a development in a way of *Shades*, even though it happened historically before *Shades*, in terms of the dates that I'm writing about, when I've come across, for example, his name in a document or in a report or something linked to my great grandpa. It gives me a completely different feeling from if I was just writing a book - some imaginary person or somebody that I had no connection with. I've never written because that's what's popular, that's what's wanted or that's what will make the market. You know what I mean? It's been what really meant something to me. Otherwise, I wouldn't do it. My cheques will prove that I'm not a bestseller of *Fifty Shades of Grey* or something like that. So that thing of being connected to what I'm writing, even if I'm fictionalizing it. I still have the sense of the real person and the real history and what that person means to me, and also the fact of what that person needs, because they're mine in a way and need to be respected. That's why even though Victor's the villain, I had to examine him and understand some of his motivations, and why that happened, and the upbringing and the schooling and all those things, which would've contributed to the kind of person he became. So in fact, he wasn't all bad and, you know, he redeemed himself in a sense in the end. And I didn't want to have clear-cut heroes and villains and things like that. Because people aren't like that. And because I also had a sense of responsibility towards him because he's also mine.

E: So I asked earlier whether you had a favorite passage. Is there any passage that's, or anything the check that in the book that looking back, you're not so bundled?

M: You're not supposed to have darlings in a book – you know that they always say 'Kill your darlings,' but I have some darlings. There's one passage when Walter and Frances are crossing the river and she tells him about the buttermilk stars, and when Father Charles realizes that obviously Walter's fallen in love with Frances. And then, I don't know why… it's a passage that I always remember and it's an important one. Your edition - I mean, so many different sorts of editions of *Shades* - it's right at the beginning. "The stars were large and clear". It's about the landscape and that church. I don't know if you remember that. It's about page eight. And then the other one which I always remember and - I can never forget who my characters are; sometimes they are peripheral ones - it is the passage about the geckos. "The geckos ran". It's when Walter's in the house in King Williams Town and he's just feeling very lonely and he sees the gecko on the wall, and I just

remember. This again, is where a writer's experience comes in with what they write - I remember going into the bathroom and there was this little gecko on the outside of the window, and I could see its whole tract, and there was a little egg inside it and the little pads on its feet. And I've still got an absolute love of geckos. I have some in this house that are very great friends of mine. And you know, that was transferring a moment of specific… an absolute present moment of looking at something and giving that moment - which had caused wonder and happiness, if you like - to one of the characters, even though in that context it was very sad for him. And there have been other passages like that. I think there's one about the wind. I've got this thing about the wind. I mean, you know what berg winds are like in the Eastern Cape. You know what it's like on those days in Grahamstown when everything is so dry, and that there's something about that wind which has a kind of…a sort of a depth and stories to it. It's like the Bushmen that bring stories with the wind. It's all tied up with that sort of landscape thing of the way of seeing a landscape, which is different. When one has access to a language likely, when just has a different way of seeing it because it's images that you would never think of that completely, aptly describe a landscape or a moment or an animal or a bird or something. Also, those are other passages which are important to share.

I came across – and this is how I started with *Recessional for Grace* – I came across a manuscript in the university library, which hadn't been taken out since 1947. Nobody had ever bothered with it, and it was absolutely full of these most wonderful metaphorical images to do with nature. I can still feel myself standing there and looking at it and just thinking, 'Oh, this is just so amazing and so beautiful and so insightful,' as well because it's absolutely apt to the landscape that has been interpreted. So, you know, those things. And in the passages in *Shades*, which are the descriptive ones of landscape, you ask me about, you know, the environment mm-hmm…. I wish I'd been an ornithologist. I really wish I'd been good at science, as I wanted to go and live up in a tree and marry a game ranger and, you know, study plants and animals and birds. So all of that is really important in what I write. And when I get back to the Eastern Cape, just seeing that bush… the Fish River with the euphorbias and things like that. I don't know… I just feel a sense of home and belonging.

E: I feel exactly the same as well.

M: It's Eastern Cape. You understand that? Yeah. It, it's got… it's got layers of meaning to it, which you can't take away from yourself, and that's a very important part of *Shades* and anything I write. In fact, perhaps more so in *Recessional For Grace* because that landscape and what the different birds and the animals and the plants and the skies and things mean give it a depth that it's not superficial. It's cultural and it's experience and it's belonging and it's history. It's your history.