

# TELLING PLACES

A PHOTOGRAPHIC EXPLORATION

VOLUME I



Dissertation presented for the Degree of Doctor of Visual Arts in the  
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at Stellenbosch University

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## Abstract

This thesis and accompanying exhibition explore landscape photography practice within the politically fraught context of the Southern African landscape and equally fraught traditions of landscape representation, especially in previously colonised countries. Ideological and political readings of landscape photographs tend to automatically position the artist and, by extension, the viewer, in a distanced, contemplative relation to the landscape (Malpas, 2011a: 6). This kind of relation skews power relations towards the viewer; in part due to the nature of the photographic medium with its monocular, static, linear perspective. This thesis seeks to question this determinist position and to explore through reflective photographic practice an alternative frame within which to engage with places photographically.

With this study I propose that a postphenomenological approach to making and thinking about landscape photography can bring about a co-constitutive relation between photographer, camera, and environment through which places continue to become. Landscape photography as representation of place is conceptualised as consisting of two stages: firstly, the act of photographing in the physical environment (*Being-in*) and secondly, the process of preparing and presenting the works (*Telling-of*).

For the first phase, *Being-in*, I created three photographic events that allowed me, as a practising photographer, to engage with the complexity of place in terms of Casey's (2001: 417) definition, which draws socio-political histories, personal histories, and the physical environment together into individual embodied experience. In the cyclic process of engaging in the practice of photographing place and reflecting on this practice in relation to phenomenological

understanding of being, as well as postphenomenological developments that entangle technologies in this being, I tested the practice against the theory and the theory against the practice, as recommended for a phenomenology of practice by Max Van Manen (2014: 66-68). For each of the three places – Morgenster, Mochudi, and Kempton Park in Southern Africa – selected for their role in different times in my personal history, I chose a different photographic system with which to work that resonated with my individual experience of that place and facilitated distinctive expressions of the experience. I then produced three bodies of photographic works.

Phase 2 is titled *Telling-of*. This section deals with the process of bringing the work produced in Phase 1 into the public discourse on land in South Africa as well as on South African landscape photography. In this telling-of, physical places are represented as 'landscape', with all its ideological and art historical 'baggage'. To contextualise the work created for this thesis, I consider this 'baggage' and relate it to the ideas and understandings developed in Phase 1, as well as a brief history of landscape photography in South Africa. *UNSETTLED: One Hundred Year Xhosa War of Resistance (1776-1876)* by Nunn is discussed as emblematic of South African photographers' engagement with land from a highly political, personally involved stance, but also as a form of practice-based research. Curatorial practice is then explored as a form of telling-by-showing in the work of Nunn, as well as the curation of my exhibition that forms part of this research: *Telling Places: A Photographic Exploration*. I explore how the curatorial process becomes a phenomenological act of shaping relations between display technologies and viewers that tells of, and is telling, of places, and thereby 'emplaces' the viewer.

## Declaration

By submitting this thesis electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained herein is my own, original work, that I am the sole author thereof (unless to the extent explicitly otherwise stated), and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

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**IN LOVING MEMORY OF NIEL JACKSON**

**(1979 - 2019)**

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANC	African National Congress	SARPTD	South African Railways Publicity and Travel Department
BPDM	Bojanala Platinum District Municipality	SLR	Single-lens reflex
DSLR	Digital single-lens reflex	TTL	Through-the-lens
LCD	Liquid crystal display	USA	United States of America
LED	Light-emitting diode	VUT	Vaal University of Technology
NMMZ	National Museums and Monuments of Zimbabwe		
NMU	Nelson Mandela University		
OED	<i>Oxford English Dictionary</i>		
PbR	Practice-based research		
PLAAS	Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies		
SADF	South African Defence Force		
SAHA	South African History Archive		
SAP	South African Police		
SAR&H	South African Railways and Harbours		

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1. Background and motivation

---

Landscape, according to Hayden Proud (2011: 9), is the most popular genre in South African art because, as “a genre, landscape is possibly more encoded and pregnant with meaning than any other”. Okwui Enwesor (2008: 86) also proclaims landscape and space to be an “inexhaustible leitmotif in South African representation”. This pregnancy and inexhaustibility stem from the significance of land in all aspects of human existence – spiritual; economical; social; personal – but in South Africa it has specific significance due to the continual contestations surrounding land and its use.

This study was conducted during a time (2016-2018) in which the debate regarding the restitution, redistribution, and expropriation of land came to a point where the Constitutional Review Committee, after reviewing public submissions, recommended that Section 25 of the South African Constitution be amended to clarify the use of land expropriation without compensation as a possible “mechanism to address the injustices of the past, inflicted on the majority of South

Africans” (Constitutional Review Committee, 2018, as cited by Mtyala, 2018). Although the passing of the Restitution of Land Rights Act, shortly after the election of the new South African government in 1994, was initially met with optimism, the implementation of this act has been portrayed as a dismal failure (in terms of righting the wrongs of the past) in South African media (Ntsebeze, 2018).

The popularity of photographic landscape representation as social practice, however, also stems in part from its offer of temporary respite from taxing and troubled social and economic situations. David Hughes (2010: xviii) describes this practice of Euro-African whites ‘escaping’ social problems by turning to nature as an ideology of “Other disregarding”. Hughes views this at work in the tendency of many white Zimbabwean and South African artists to focus on nature and the ‘natural landscape’ in their art in an effort to forge a sense of belonging in a land where they felt like strangers (Hughes, 2010: 4-6). According to Hughes (Hughes 2010: 4-6), a sense of belonging sought by white settlers and their descendants is gained by forging a relationship with the land and nature instead of the indigenous people.

My father was born in Zimbabwe and became an avid amateur photographer, very much enthralled by landscape. I thus grew up looking at landscape photography. In my own personal history, therefore, love of nature and landscape features prominently, especially in the form of my father's photography of the mission stations we lived in in Zimbabwe and Botswana. Yet, my own 'love of nature' and landscape is ambivalent, as I have come to doubt its origins, even though I cannot honestly affirm Breyten Breytenbach's statement that white South Africans' love of landscape "slides towards pathology" because it has "contributed to the delusion [...] that white South Africans should own the landscape" (Hughes, 2010: 4).

An exploration of photographic representation of land in South Africa seems particularly pertinent, but also treacherous within this political climate. As a photographer, I am drawn to representing the environment. I am drawn outside, to where I can observe how people, animals, weather, light, topography, 'nature', and culture clash and are entangled in specific places. Yet, I wonder whether my photographing of landscape can contribute anything constructive in the contemporary South African art context, with the political and

ideological baggage that both landscape as representational construct and art historical category, and photography, as means of representation, carry.

The purpose of this study is to explore landscape photographic practice with this ambivalent attitude, and thereby review and rework my own way of photographing. With this exploration I want to make productive use of the problems inherent in landscape as artistic representation and specifically in the photographic representation of landscape by employing a practice-based research (PbR) methodology, with the hope that this methodology will offer a way to represent my experience of photographing, and contribute a new and deeper understanding of this practice and develop deepened and more complex understanding and experience of the Southern African landscape that I can share with others in the form of an exhibition.

In this purpose the visceral experience of artistic practice is intimately entangled with technological mediation of both the experience of being in a place and the telling of this experience in the form of photographic artworks. The centrality of the mediating technologies

suggests using postphenomenology as theoretical frame, or rather as philosophical approach.

In this thesis I follow a somewhat unconventional structure by not providing a comprehensive literature review, in order to maintain the flow of the argument, which draws together quite a number of different fields of study. Therefore, the kind of information normally contained in a literature review is woven into the first few sections of what I call Phase 1, as well as the first sections of Phase 2.

In what follows I provide a breakdown of the problems of landscape and landscape photography in Southern Africa as the 'setting' within which this study was conducted, which will lead to a brief overview of postphenomenology and how it ties in with a PbR methodology. In a sense, the first preliminary insight gained from this study, which resulted from the initial literature review on phenomenology and landscape, was to suggest that landscape be considered as a representation of 'place' rather than of land. A preoccupation with place, however, has its own polemics, and therefore forms part of the problem and part of the solution, and hence motivates the use of the word 'place' instead of 'landscape' in the title of this study.

## 1.2. The problem of landscape

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Landscape as photographic subject matter presents a peculiar problem and fascination for a photographer. On the one hand, it is easy to slip into the mode of passive viewer, seduced by conventional tropes of the pictorial or the sublime that inspire romantic and nostalgic reverie; that naturalises the inherent power relations and politics that form part of any landscape (Malpas, n.d.: 9), be it pristine or built up. On the other hand, landscape is a rich and fruitful subject that relates palpably to the human condition and the wonders of the world in equal measure. The representation of landscape goes far beyond the 'natural'. While, according to David Lowenthal (2007: 160-161), in popular use the word landscape has come to imply "what is nowadays held to be dear and good— the local, the particular, the authentic, the natural", human geographer John Wylie contends that within the arts, social sciences, and even, since the 1980s, cultural geography, landscapes are understood as "human, cultural and creative domains as well as, or even rather than, natural or physical phenomena" (Wylie, 2007: 8; original emphasis).

A combination of phenomenologist Edward Casey (2001a: 417) and geographer John B. Jackson's (1975: 7) ideas explain landscape as a composition of places on the land. In terms of our "visual experience of our everyday worlds" (Jackson, 1975: 8), landscape is, however, also "a portion of the earth's surface that can be comprehended at a glance" (Jackson 1975: 8), encompassing both "nature and changes that humans have effected on the natural world" (Wells, 2011: 2). From Jackson's definition of landscape as "a composition of places", which Casey also cites, it is clear that landscape is inextricably linked to place. Jackson and Casey both refer to the physical landscape, and not to representations such as paintings or photographs, but the link between the physical landscape and place implies that representations that are concerned with landscape are as much concerned with place. A closer examination of place as a concept, as well as physical reality, reveals that place is politically charged and philosophically complex. In this study I draw heavily on Malpas's reinterpretation of Martin Heidegger's thinking in light of Levinas' criticisms of Heidegger's preoccupation with place. As such, Heidegger's writing that is particularly concerned with 'place' is also influential in this thesis.

The visual representation of place reaches towards the aesthetic, thereby showing that landscape aesthetics is also a polemical issue that comes to the fore when disparate cultures inhabit a country. The understanding of landscape is therefore dependent on the understanding of place, which Casey (2001a: 404) described as "the immediate ambience of my lived body and its history, including the whole sedimented history of cultural and social influences and personal interests that compose my life-history". Even though 'landscape' is not necessarily representational, for the sake of clarity in this thesis, I will refrain from using the word 'landscape' unless referring to aestheticised visual representations such as landscape paintings or photographs.

Landscape representation as a genre in Western art has come full circle in that it has progressed from being the setting for what was perceived as more important subjects such as historical events, didactic depictions of religious or mythical events, or portraits, to becoming a primary source of meaning emblematic of romantic ideals (Szarkowski, 1981: 9) and modernist concerns with pure form (Jussim & Lindquist-Cock, 1985), to being criticised for precisely those qualities since at least the 1980s. Negative criticisms of

landscape as an art genre are often centred on the critique of occularcentrism and dualisms (amongst others, insider-outsider, subject-object, active-passive, nature-culture) purportedly entrenched by landscape representations.

A concern with the representation of landscape is particularly problematic in Southern Africa with its colonial past, changing political landscapes, changing relationships with land (Kok, Gelderblom, Oucho & Van Zyl, 2006), and land ownership contestations (Cousins, 2009; Fick, 2014). As part of a list of theses on landscape, William Mitchell (2002: 5) contends that landscape, as a particular historical formation associated with European imperialism, has been exhausted and is "no longer viable as a mode of artistic expression". This claim is in apparent agreement with Dennis Cosgrove's (1984: 12) earlier statement that "landscape as an active concern for progressive art died in the second half of the nineteenth century".

James Elkins (Delue & Elkins, 2008: 120), however, mentions that landscape representation continues to play significant roles in popular visual media, artistic production, and expression. Liz Wells (2011: 5-6) also refers to the role landscape plays as a source of

human pleasure, self-location, and identification (albeit temporarily). The popularity of landscape as subject matter for hobbyist photographers, tourists, and travellers confirms this. Writing in 1994, John Taylor (1994: 10) suggests that it also confirms that the dominant look, namely the masculine gaze that surveys, dominates, and controls, is intact, despite numerous efforts to dismantle it.

Ideologies of land representation in South Africa, however, continue to be contested and have recently been re-examined in several publications and curated exhibitions. These include the exhibition and publication, *Lie of the Land* (2010) edited and curated by Michael Godby, *Appropriated Landscapes* edited and curated by Corinne Diserens, the *Terra* (2011-2012) series curated by Elfriede Dreyer, as well as a section of *Figure/Ground: Reflections on the South African Reserve Bank Art Collection* (O'Toole, 2007), with an essay by Sean O'Toole. These exhibitions and publications exemplify the continuing polemic over issues of possession, belonging, heritage, nationhood, and exploitation in relation to the South African landscape, which is also explored in some depth through practice in fine artist Franki Burger's master's study (2008).

The preoccupation with land in South African art escalated in 2013, a century after the instatement of the 1913 Natives Land Act, which O'Toole describes as "a decisive piece of legislation that formalised the colonial land grab and created a landless labour class, the legacy of the Act served as the thematic bull's-eye for various creative projects in 2013". Beyond being the intentional 'thematic bull's-eye', for many projects on land, 100 plus years later, the 1913 Natives Land Act haunts every representation of land created in South Africa since and before 1913. As Phillip Maughan (2013: 1) writes, landscape in Southern Africa is always political. The projects included in the *Terminal* exhibition, which formed part of GIPCA's *LAND*<sup>1</sup> project, for instance, must be read in terms of the 1913 Natives Land Act. Even Brent Meistre's 2008 photograph, *Blocked Road, Horing Bay, West Coast, Namibia*, leading nowhere, must be read against the background of how space was structured in South

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<sup>1</sup> An event that comprised "performances, visual art installations, public lectures and panels about land, territory, ownership and art" organised by the Gordon Institute of Performance and Creative Arts (Gordon Institute for Performing and Creative Arts, 2013).

<sup>2</sup> In a discussion of the meaning of 'political', Eugene Miller (1980: 57) explains that it means, in an equivocal way, that "things are referred to by the same word, but referred to in ways that vary according to the beingness of the things

Africa as a result of the 1913 Natives Land Act. Several books on or related to landscape photography in South Africa (*Transitions; Tales From The City Of Gold; Legacy of the Mine; People Apart: 1950s Cape Town Revisited*) were published around 2013-2014 (O'Toole, 2014), which reinvigorated interest in landscape photography and land issues, but in a very politicised and ideologically critical way. Landscape art is therefore still relevant, but its role has changed. The works and projects mentioned above were not concerned with landscape aesthetically in the first place, although in the visual arts aesthetic considerations are unavoidable. Through many different styles and approaches, the landscape is politicised,<sup>2</sup> in that it is understood as being of cardinal importance to various communities. This importance lies in various capacities of land as, for instance, an economic resource, home of ancestors, shelter and home; to name but a few. The aesthetics of land is, however, at least since the 1980s,

themselves". In this way, the word 'politics' refers to things that are relevant to things of the *polis* or to the *polis* itself, where the *polis* is a "way of associating to achieve a common purpose" (Miller, 1980: 72). Miller refers to things such as food supplies and security as political in that they are of interest to the wellbeing of the community (Miller, 1980: 62). In this way, land and landscape become political when they are seen to be of importance to the wellbeing of a community.

considered to be a distraction that directs attention away from the more important issues mentioned above. The “detached contemplation” and aesthetic appreciation of landscape are no longer in vogue, as Lowenthal (2007: 635-636) wrote, “scenic charms are derided as superficial, frivolous, even soulless; to dwell on decor is to scant integral landscape values, notably ecological fitness, residential sustainability, community health and historical authenticity”.

O’Toole (2007: 112) affirms that the “very act” of describing the physical attributes of the South African landscape is problematic due to the ideological implications of aesthetic attentions to landscape that dominate the topographical features of representations. According to J. M. Coetzee (1988: 6-7) (amongst many others), the aestheticisation of landscape is a European import; it is impossible to “recover and express African notions of landscape” (Ranger, 2000: 53-54). In an article titled “African views of the land: A research agenda”, Terrence Ranger (2000) challenges Coetzee’s statements by compiling an account of various ways that Africans imagine the landscape. What emerges from Ranger’s account is that the African landscape is imagined as a lived place in terms of people’s religions,

needs, and histories, rather than in terms of generalisable abstractions. Malpas (2009: 5) suggests that in ‘indigenous’ cultures, relationships between humans and places are “established and sustained, not through the exercise of authority over the place – through ensuring one’s own exclusive access to it – but rather through journeying across it and through the stories that such journeying embodies and expresses”.

Malpas (2011a: 6), who is a central author in this study, frames the ‘problem of landscape’ as stemming from its association with and representation of a relation with the world that “always involves separation and detachment”. This kind of relation to the world, and more specifically to land and environment, is problematic because it engenders a way of looking at the world that implies a power relation in which human subjects control, structure, and order the environment (as an object) to be available for visual (and eventually physical) consumption (Bright, 1992: 60; Taylor, 2008: 3). Landscape therefore inspires a particular way of looking (Cosgrove & Daniels, 1988), which has come to be referred to as the “landscape way of seeing” (Wylie, 2007: 55-56).

According to Kay McEvoy (2007: 3), “a search for the meaning of existence in this colonially encoded space endures”. This is evident in works and projects by David Goldblatt, Jo Ractliffe, Santu Mofokeng, and Michael Subotzky, recently compiled in *Appropriated Landscapes* (Diserens, 2011). This volume demonstrates the various ways in which photographers react to, or engage with, the ideological saturation of the South African landscape, very notably through a combination of image and text, ranging from the seemingly objective series of David Goldblatt to the intellectual wit of Svea Josephy, the highly personal embodied confrontations of Jo Ractliffe and Santu Mofokeng, and the political activist approach of Nunn.<sup>3</sup> South African landscape photography practice has progressed far beyond the traditional, conventional, much criticised canon, to a point where new conventions have been established, such as what Enwezor (2008: 86) labels an “aesthetic ascetism” that avoids social exhibitionism by employing “visual

inhibition” but could easily become opaque; almost creating a next layer of saturation.

### 1.3. Postphenomenology as frame for landscape photography

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Despite the developments mentioned in the previous paragraph, the photographic medium is still singled out as the main culprit in the centralisation and separation of the perceiving subject from the perceived object, because photographic optics rely on single point of view, linear perspective, which privileges sight over the other senses (Taylor, 1994; see Newell, 2005 for a summary and cursory challenge of such criticisms).

Martin Jay (1993), for instance, discussed at length how ocularcentrism in Western cultures, based essentially on Cartesian perspectivalism, contributed to the impetus for the development of photographic technology and the resultant association of photographic images with truth, knowledge, and reality (Wells, 2011: 40). The technology developed within an ocularcentric culture thus

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<sup>3</sup> Nunn intertwines the political with the personal to some extent and will be discussed in detail in Phase 2 of this study.

developed such practices further. As Wells (2011: 265) puts it, photography as a product of modern scientific and technological development is a “tool in the service of modern aspirations” in which the sense of sight is privileged over the other senses, as is mind over body, because it removes the visceral and separates the viewer from ‘reality’ by putting a frame around a scene.

Linear or optical perspective has developed in modern society as the dominant form of representing reality (Wells, 2011: 36). Erwin Panofsky (1991), however, successfully argues that this view of reality is culturally constructed, and that photographic technology was developed in such a way that it mimicked the dominant conventions of representing reality. The ‘picture plane’ (Panofsky, 1991: 27) of linear perspective that acts as a window on reality separates the photographer (subject) from the landscape (object), and reinforces the dualities of observer-observed and insider-outsider. I can relate this interpretation of photography as a representational medium to David Michel Levin’s (2001: 439) description of the *assertoric gaze*, which “tends to see from only one perspective, one standpoint, one and only one position”. From the examples above, it would seem as if using photography to represent the environment presupposes a

specific kind of relationship between humans and their environment. The relationship is in a sense predetermined by the nature of photographic technology.

In *Landscape Theory*, edited by Elkins, the Art Seminar panel discuss phenomenology as a possible antidote or solution to “ideological analysis and the supposed excesses of discourse theory” (Casid, 2011: 184), albeit with reservations. Although the panel does not conclusively agree that phenomenology is indeed a sufficient solution, the turn towards phenomenology provides an entry point towards the discovery of a less Eurocentric, less singular, more multifocal approach to landscape. The opening of phenomenological ideas to other philosophical approaches such as Don Ihde’s marrying of pragmatism with phenomenology, which he labelled postphenomenology, can potentially provide a non-deterministic understanding of photographic technologies. Phenomenology contributes a more relational and less hierarchical model of landscape with a potential “new praxis that we might dub remystification” (Marshall, 2008: 198) of landscape. Postphenomenology in turn provides a way of including photography in this process of ‘remystification’, while at the same

time re-politicising landscape photography in a more personal, localised, and specific way.

Ihde, whose influential work is central to the arguments developed in this thesis, held that all science is inextricably tied up with technology (Viljoen, 2009: 88) and that technoscience – through which technological artefacts such as cameras are produced – “directly or indirectly implies bodily action, perception, and praxis” (Ihde, 2009: 46). Our relations with machines are non-neutral, as Pieter-Paul Verbeek, an important figure in developing Ihde’s ideas further, explained: “[w]hat the world ‘is’ and what subjects ‘are,’ arises from the interplay between humans and reality, as it is mediated by technology” (Verbeek, 2009: 4). This mediation is, however, not a property of the artefact itself but can only be understood in terms of relations human beings have with them within specific contexts (Verbeek, 2010: 116). In terms of photographic technology, what we look at; what we see when we look, how we look, and how we interpret and react to what we see and understand, are shaped by cameras – in their various incarnations and applications just as we also shape how and for what purposes cameras are used. As such, a postphenomenological frame for the

exploration of landscape photography necessitates an interrogation of relations that shape and are shaped in the coming together of photographer, environment, and technology.

Casey (2002: xvi, xvii) contends that abovementioned dimensions cannot be dealt with outside of place: “Just as body is always necessarily ‘placed’, wherever place and landscape is found, there body will also be present and, furthermore, the same rule obtains when it comes to representing places”. The consideration of human-technology-world relations then becomes specific to individual places, which is in line with Verbeek’s (2010: 116) emphasis on the importance of context in a postphenomenological paradigm. There is therefore a productive interplay between the experience (with and through a camera) and the photographic representation of the landscape that needs to be investigated.

In an earlier practice-based PhD study titled “Phenomenology and Landscape Experience: A Critical Appraisal for Contemporary Art Practice”, Bren Unwin (2008: 8) developed a model for “a rigorous application of phenomenology” in contemporary art practice that engages with the representation of landscape experience. Unwin (2008: 8) describes her practice as giving “particular emphasis to the

placement of the camera and its associated technology in order to reveal the dynamic relationship between a perceiver and their environment in the twenty-first century". She purposefully focuses on the way in which pre-reflexive embodied experience is mediated by technology (Unwin, 2008: 185). Pre-reflexive experience refers to experience that is unmediated by conscious reflection on experience. Pre-reflexive thought is said to be primary to all other human responses, and amounts to relatively direct experience (Declerck & Gapenne, 2009: 293). For Unwin it is therefore important that she does not respond to her environment by changing the position of the video camera once it has been placed and the recording of audio-visual footage has been started. She also allows external factors to dictate when the recording is stopped. This removal of selectivity, however, also removes a sense of individuated experience, which is counter to Casey's (2001a: 404) understanding of experience of place, as explained earlier.

Following the views of Robert Sokolowski (2000: 67) and Dylan Trigg (2012: 17) that memory and imagination are very much embodied aspects of human experience, the present study builds on Unwin's work by basing the investigation on an understanding of embodied

experience as not only pre-reflexive, but also encompassing mind (memory and imagination) and body. I therefore build on Unwin's (2008) investigation by interrogating landscape photography practice in terms of more recent postphenomenological developments.

#### 1.4. Research questions and aims

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How can being in a place as a photographer translate into the telling of place in a way that explores and demonstrates relations between photographer, land, and technologies that does not automatically situate power with a distant, detached viewer? Tied to this first question is the question of what a practice-based photographic representation of specific places can contribute in terms of the understanding of land?

My own engagement with the representation of place through the medium of photography is motivated by a need to test the parameters of the genre of landscape as it pertains to my role as an artist and occupant of place in South Africa today. I aim to explore how effective the practice-based research (PbR) approach could be in developing new understanding regarding the representational construction of place in the South African context through the

medium of photography. Although PbR is well established internationally, the nature of the knowledge contributions of a PbR study are still being debated in South African arts academies (Hall, 2014: 3-4). There remains a need for further development of an epistemology of practice, or more specifically, “a need for more theory about practice coming out of what artists and designers actually do methodologically. We need to know how we think through art” (Jones, 2009: 263). This experiment is thus intent on both creating and bringing a particular process of creating, namely the PbR method, under review.

My research aims can thus only be answered by allowing for my practice as artist-photographer and theorist-writer to interact. By drawing together a phenomenology of landscape and postphenomenology of photography, my aim is to describe (and tell of) a mode of being in the world that speaks of places as particular human-landscape-camera entanglements. In this aim I find a particularly strong resonance between postphenomenology as philosophical frame and PbR into and through landscape photography.

## 1.5. Methodology

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PbR is often used interchangeably with practice-led research in the arts (Borgdorff, 2006: 23, as cited by Sullivan, 2009: 79). My use of the term practice-based research (PbR) is deliberate and refers to research based in practice with practice as a central aspect of the research contribution, as opposed to research led by practice towards exploring theoretical issues that are not necessarily embodied in the practice as that they are treated as a form of data to be analysed. At the same time, however, in my understanding of PbR, the practice forms an integral part of the research process, or method. Discoveries are to be made by engaging in the making processes and reflecting on this engagement as much as on the outcomes.

There remains much scepticism and doubt about the possible nature of the contribution a practice-based study could make, as well as the appropriate nature of such a contribution (Mottram, 2009: 11) as academic research. Steven Scrivener (2002) argues that the appropriate contribution of academic study in the arts should be art, which is not communicable knowledge, but rather new ways of “apprehending”, that is, perceiving and understanding the world.

Graham Sullivan summarises PbR as art practice that has as purpose “to expand our knowledge and understanding by conducting an original investigation in and through art objects and creative processes” (2009: 79). Sullivan, however, does not clarify whether it is knowledge and understanding of the creative process, the theme, or concept that the resultant artworks addresses, or the artworks themselves that are expanded.

Many established and proposed research designs for PbR (also called studio research in art) (Marshall, 2010), has as its main seat of knowledge contribution the processes involved in making. The knowledge about such new processes is purportedly embodied in the artworks but can mainly be found in the ‘exegesis’, which contains the reflections by the artist on theory, actions, and results involved in the creative process. The exegesis then becomes the main site of the contribution because it is written down and explained in verbal language, even though it cannot be evaluated separately from the creative work. Daniel Jewesbury (2009: 2) laments that this kind of research could very well lead to insights into the making of “stolidly” mediocre art.

In an effort to develop a framework for research into photographic practice, Jakob Doman and myself (Doman & Laurie, 2010) developed a set of questions to guide reflection on photographic practice in such a way that it is based on how photographers work, but still develops outputs that are relevant research contributions as well as creative contributions. Although the research design for the *Telling Places* project was initially loosely based on this early model for PbR, it evolved organically into a less formally structured process. The preliminary results of Phase 1, for instance, influenced the kinds of questions I ask in the reflection on my curatorial practice in Phase 2, as I explain in more detail in the next section. The stated aim of describing (and telling of) a mode of being in the world that speaks of places as particular human-landscape-camera entanglements was only formulated once the practice was well under way. A further evolution that takes place in the course of this study is that the effectiveness of the practice-based method as research method, as well as a method for the making of art, is reviewed and reflected on while being implemented. This is done according to the guidelines developed by Linda Candy and Ernest Edmonds (2011) which recommends that PbR involves a cyclic process in which the artist-researcher develops a framework that guides “their practice and the

evaluation of the outcomes of that practice: i.e. artefacts that are submitted along with a written text" (Candy & Edmonds, 2011: 127). In this sense, not only does the framework that guides the practice and the practice itself develop together, as Candy and Edmonds (2011: 130) observe, but the research design also evolves and becomes part of the making process.

Michelle Mountain (2010) argues that much of the new criticality of South African photography (with reference to Goldblatt, Ractliffe, and Mofokeng) is generated through the interaction of image and text, rather than through the visuals themselves, possibly indicating the limits of the photographic medium, and the power of image-text combinations (Mountain, 2010: 91, 109-110). A practice-based study of landscape photography provides the opportunity to further develop this interaction between image and text in the form of reflexive practice in line with Cora Marshall's (2008) conclusion that successful artistic research is fully realised when a synergy between word and image; theory and practice is achieved in the cyclical processes of making and reflecting. Marshall's optimistic faith in this method is, however, tempered by Elkins' (2010: 246) concern that there is a conceptual difficulty with regard to PbR, which "lies in the

foundational requirement of simultaneously and/or alternately, making, understanding and writing about one's own practice" (Hall, 2014: 4).

Scrivener (2002) proposes that arts research should strive to engender novel apprehensions of the world, explaining that arts research should provide ways of seeing that fall outside of recognisable norms (Butler, 2009: 12) and established tropes. Rather than certainties and knowledge that can be extracted from the knowledge artefact, arts research offers potentialities and possibilities of seeing and being in the world that have not yet been offered. PbR is an exploratory method that is process-driven in that new problems are discovered while engaging in the creative processes, which could redirect the theoretical aspects of the enquiry as well as the subsequent practice. Experimentation and play are at the heart of PbR, which therefore involves a large measure of unpredictability; much more so than in other kinds of qualitative research. Louise Hall (2014: 4) confirmed that the nature of the knowledge that this model may generate and expectations of the textual and visual components of a practice-based study are still not adequately defined, which not only makes the assessment and

engagement with this model an arduous task, but also provides a rational for a sceptical stance on whether new kinds of knowledge can in fact be generated through this methodology that cannot be generated through other, more traditional methods.

## 1.6. Study design and chapter overview

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The proposed study spans both research for and research through practice, according to Christopher Frayling's 1994 classification of research in Arts and Design. I propose to experiment with landscape photography by taking experience of place as a subject with the view to open up alternative frames for the reading of landscape based on the interaction and relationship shaped in the coming together of photographer, place, and photographic technologies. An exhibition and dissertation combination seeks to establish how, if at all, PbR could indeed contribute to a deepening of understanding of landscape photography practice and the South African landscape.

The envisaged output of this study is an exhibition of photography-based artworks coupled with a dissertation in service of, but of equal importance to, the art practice. In both Phases 1 and 2 I demonstrate how the reflection, thinking, and writing processes develop together with the practice. In this submission, the written component

therefore articulates what the practice does, but also how the resultant practice came about.

The literature review for this study is therefore not conducted in a separate chapter but is rather integrated organically into the two phases or sections of this study, as it drives and is driven by the creative process. The literature covered thus pertains to phenomenology and postphenomenology in the context of technological mediation of human experience; the creative work of other photographers and their writing about their own practice; literature on landscape representation; literature on the creative process of photographing and curating; and how these relate to the research and making processes involved.

A process of reflection on landscape photography in my own prior practice – in relation to contemporary landscape theory – led me to the decision to base the practical component of the study on places with autobiographical significance. In order to contain the project, I only explore three places: Morgenster Mission (Zimbabwe), where I lived as a baby; Mochudi (Botswana) and Nietverdiend, where I lived and schooled as a child; and Kempton Park, where I now live. This

selection of places spans three countries and three distinct periods of my life.

While creative works evolve together in a non-linear, cyclic pattern (Marshall uses the image of the helix to illustrate the process) in the thesis this process is presented as two seemingly sequential phases, namely, *Being-in*, which relates to the act of photographing in places and the physical interaction between photographer, place, and photographic technologies, and *Telling-of*, which relates to the presentation of the photographic works generated through Phase 1 and the interactions between exhibition space, viewer, and presentation technologies.

Through this process of making, thinking, reading, rethinking, and making again, a practitioner's framework is developed that guides the curatorial process but also, upon the conclusion of the study, serves as a framework for the evaluation of the work it helped create. Upon the conclusion of the study, I then also critically review the practice-based approach as a way of exploring places and assess what and how this creative research process contributed to the understanding of landscape.

For an artist, being-in is tied to telling-of. Even so, I deliberately segregate the two for the purposes of this thesis in order to understand the importance of each phase in the artistic process. The two phases are not strictly speaking sequential but is presented in this way to better focus my inquiry into each aspect of landscape photography.

#### PHASE 1: BEING-IN

The purpose of this first section, *Being-in*, is to develop and present my position as a landscape photographer in relation to my intent regarding the creative output of this study. While this section is placed first in the thesis (after the introduction), the actual process of developing a statement of intent or practitioner's framework is non-linear and is revisited continuously as the creative outputs take shape. The first step towards achieving this purpose is to provide an argument for the choice of subject matter and initial choices regarding my photographic approach.

The title of this section, *Being-in*, points to a consideration of embodied experience of place. As Christopher Tilley put it, "being in a Landscape means that the limits of the space of the body are in the things with which it interacts. The space of the body in motion

underpins the perception of things" (Tilley & Bennett, 2008: 41). In the context of this study, the discussion is focused on experience of place with and through a camera. Don Ihde's theory of the relational ontological trinity of human-technology-world (Goeminne & Paredis, 2011: 101; Ihde, 2009: 34) suggests that the camera, as a technological tool, does not only mediate the representation of place to the viewer, but also mediates and impacts on the direct experience of the photographer in place.

The first leg of the research therefore involves an exploration of the intertwining of subject and object towards an understanding of visual representations of landscape as representative of the tensions between proximity and distance, body and mind, and sensuous immersion and detached observation that make up the reality of landscape, according to Wylie (2012: 371). This relates to my being-in and moving-through specific places of autobiographical relevance and consideration of this experience as worth representing. My personal memories and imaginings, together with the history of a specific man-made or geographical structure or space, form an integral part of this reflection. The broad objective would be to critically interrogate an individuated experience of place as an

antidote to ideological saturation, but also to interrogate how the camera impacts on experience of place.

Phenomenological intentionality and reflexivity are key concepts that inform my representation and engagement with landscape in that I draw on perception, remembering, and anticipation/ imagination (Sokolowski, 2000: 85) subject matter for my photography; in addition to the physical topography of the land. Subject and object are intertwined, as illustrated by Merleau-Ponty's (1962: 23) comments that, "[t]he visible about us seems to rest in itself. It is as though our vision were formed in the heart of the visible, or as though there were between it and us an intimacy as close as between the sea and the strand." In light of Merleau-Ponty's further statement that "our vision clothes the visible", a consideration of the camera's part in this clothing is essential to the understanding of landscape photography practice. A key issue that is explored in this study is the possibility of dislodging the association of the camera's single-point perspective with the Western model of linear perspective (Baetens, Van Gelder & Streitberger, 2008: 1) and an interrogation of how vision mediated by the camera relates to Levin's (1988: 68, as cited by Jay, 1993: 275) distinction between the "assertoric" and

"aletheic" gaze. As Jay (1993: 275) explained, "where the former is abstracted, monocular, inflexible, unmoving, rigid, ego-logical and exclusionary; the latter is multiple, aware of its context, inclusionary, horizontal, and caring".

In summary, Phase 1 is descriptive of my own visceral experience of three places that hold remembered and imaginary aspects. Thus the discussion relies on phenomenology as a theory that is focused on experience. Phase 1 is also about my experience being mediated by the camera (mine and my father's) and thus postphenomenology is useful. In Phase 1 I follow Unwin's adaptation of Tilley's method of enquiry into material forms within the landscape to artistic engagement with landscape by layering information drawn from "initial research, a bodily association with the environment and critical evaluation using both pre-existing literature and information gathered from embodied experience" (Unwin, 2008: 54).

#### PHASE 2: TELLING-OF

In Phase 2 of this research project I continue the practice by curating the photographic images produced in Phase 1 into an exhibition that seeks to tell of the three places I worked with and of my photographing in these places. This exhibition was documented in

the form of a website, which can be viewed at [annekedeklerkphotography.co.za](http://annekedeklerkphotography.co.za). This website is not treated as part of the exhibition but is rather a measure put in place to allow a sense of the exhibition space and the moving imagery to be conveyed.

Phase 2 of this dissertation is focused on describing and understanding how places are 'told' through landscape photography and curatorial practices in South Africa. In order to achieve this, I first unpack the transition from 'place' to 'landscape' as representation of place but also as an art historical category with its own problematic ideologies embodied within aesthetic conventions and tropes. Insights gained from the explorations through practice and theory in Phase 1, however, steer the understanding of landscape photography in the postcolonial context of Southern Africa towards Malpas's concept of *re*-presentation of real places; of 'emplacement', that is entangled relations between human and environment with technology.

This notion is explored in an overview of South African landscape photography in general and Nunn's *Unsettled* project specifically as an example of PbR (outside of the academy) that expands landscape photography into curatorial practice as a continual emplacement.

This section serves to some extent as a literature survey with the purpose of establishing what has been done in the field, and what remains to be explored, to prevent duplication. This, as Tim Jones (2009: 270) also mentioned, is impossible in the arts because there is no complete catalogue of peer-reviewed works. I do, however, focus on South African photographers' engagement with landscape as theme and subject.

Representation of place is considered as 'telling' in the sense that it not only tells of a specific place and my specific experience of place but also as 'telling' in the sense of revealing or 'giving away' autobiographical aspects and being politically significant. The exhibition of my practical work forms the heart of this study and constitutes my own form of telling of and through landscape photography. The distinctive features<sup>4</sup> of the photographic medium are regarded as an aspect of telling of the landscape that must be

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<sup>4</sup> These features include aspects such as the capturing of the moment and the link with memories that this inspires (Wells, 2011: 44), the illusion of "thereness" of the subject as discussed by Gerry Badger (2000) and its ability to render detail not intentionally represented, termed the "optical unconscious" by Walter Benjamin (cited by Wells, 2011: 39). Although much of the distinctiveness of

carefully negotiated and interrogated as part of the curatorial process.

Phase 2 therefore presents a mapping of how insights gained regarding the photographic mediation of experience of place in Phase 1; an understanding of how photographers (and Nunn in particular) tell landscape in southern Africa; the curatorial theories and concepts relating to how photographic works tell; and postphenomenological understanding of how display technologies mediate experience in an exhibition space informed curation of the three bodies of work into a single exhibition. Through the practice-based method I therefore attempt to combine curatorship of word and image as a second mediation of my experience of the three places.

This multi-faceted approach allows me to engage with the complexity and inaccessibility of the South African landscape, which Mountain (2010: 113) described as having been "written by

photography as a medium is based on illusion, the illusion remains powerful. Scepticism regarding the indexical and even iconic nature of photographs does not change the *seemingly* un-coded nature of the photographic image (Eco, 1982; Mitchell, 1994).

colonialism and apartheid as unstable and unhinged, but unable to re-write its identity in postmodernism and post-colonialism that is by its very nature equally unstable and unhinged”.

## CONCLUSIONS

In the concluding sections I reflect on my research process as a network of interactions between practical and theoretical engagement with the topic. This allows the two preceding components of my research to come together in the representational space of ideas, imaginings, theories, making, and ideals. This dissertation therefore brings two ways of telling (taking photographs and curation of an exhibition) together in yet another telling, this time through writing.

The concluding sections present a summative reflection on my practice but mainly on the PbR process that “prompt[s] the practitioner to deconstruct her experiences in ways that hopefully will lead to understanding and insights” (Johns, 2010: 36) that are transferable within the context of landscape photography practice but also contributes to deeper understanding of the Southern African landscape and three places that form part of this landscape.

# PHASE 1: BEING-IN

## PREFACE TO BEING IN

In this first phase of the present study, I engage with various places as a photographer, as a “representing body”, as Casey (2002: xvii) would put it. In order to create representations of places, “photographers, unlike painters and sculptors, need to engage with the world out there” (Sonlit, 2001: 59). To photograph a place – to capture the illumination itself and the light reflected from the environment (in the traditional way) – one must be physically present and actively open to perception.

Even so, the resultant photographic representation of place, landscape, is conventionally seen as “a genre of discrete imagemaking in which the divide between image and spectator is absolute” (Sonlit, 2001: 59). This separation between subject and object in landscape representation is often the starting point of critiques of landscape as a specific way of looking that is ideologically and politically problematic. In this chapter I aim to propose a different starting point for the critique and practice of landscape representation through an examination and interrogation of the photographer as “representing body” in the physical

environment, alongside philosophical perspectives on embodied being and experience.

Such a focus is, however, not a shying away from politics because experience is also cultural, social, and political (Casey, 2002: xvi). Casey maintained, however, that there is an “identifiable stratum of that experience that has its own modes of receptivity and understanding” (2002: xvi) (and representation) that involves the body and all its physical and mental faculties. Such bodily involvement in place and “*a fortiori* the representing body”, is also, according to Casey, capable of alliances with landscape that call for their own analysis, in their own quite different terms (Casey, 2002: xvii).

The unsatisfactory politics of landscape photography that developed due to a dualist, anthropocentric understanding of the relation between photographer and place, viewer, and landscape result in representational theories of perception as well as constructivist-relativist notions of how meaning comes about. Given this problematic politicisation of landscape, the main purpose of this phase of the study is to explore alternative ways of making sense of the world by re-examining the interaction between photography, the

camera (and photographic system), and the environment, within the context of landscape photography practice.

The problem as described above can then be formulated as a distinctly phenomenological question for this phase of the study, namely within the context of landscape photography practice, what kinds of interactions happen between photographer, camera, and landscape and, importantly, how do such relations shape how we make sense of the world?

This question is built on the assumption that there are indeed various ways that meaning can come about and that this results in different kinds of meaning. In what follows, this assumption will be motivated through literature on a range of theories based in phenomenology and then also more contemporary theories that have developed out of phenomenology as postphenomenologies that entangle human existence with tools and technologies and things. This entanglement is of especial interest in terms of how the camera operates as mediating technology in the experience and representation of places.

Part of the discussion of phenomenological theories involves the role of art in phenomenology – as a possible generative source of

meaning. I therefore argue that the aims of PbR are closely aligned with phenomenological enquiry and its expanded forms. I thereby motivate my choice of phenomenology as a philosophical framework within which to conduct the present study.

The heart of Phase 1 of the study is a reflection on my own photographic practice in relation to theoretical perspectives based in phenomenology. The three places I work with (and in) are of autobiographical relevance: Morgenster Mission, where I lived for a short while as a baby, where my father grew up, but of which I have no direct memories; Mochudi and Nietverdiend, where I spent the happiest parts of my childhood; and Kempton Park, a place I recently moved to, and still need to learn to know as home.

The various places featured in this study brought about different questions and different ways of relating, interacting, and thinking. This approach was motivated by the places themselves but also, as affirmation, by Bruce Janz' statement that "in short, if one is to speak of dwelling, one must speak of it differently in different places" (Janz, 2010: 23). According to Malpas's interpretation (2014), speaking of dwelling differently in different places is to question Heidegger's notions of dwelling, as he himself invited his readers to do. For

Malpas, therefore, “to dwell is to stand in such a relation [to place] of attentiveness and responsiveness, of listening and of questioning” (Malpas, 2014: 21). My reflections on experiences of the three places are loosely organised around the themes that unfold in the discussion of the theory, namely the placedness of being, the simultaneously active and passive nature of perception, being as always ‘being-with’ in various ways but particularly also as being-with technology, and then also the role of absence in how we make sense of the world, which also relates to the decentralisation of human experience in our understanding of ‘being’.

The main aim of Phase 1 is therefore to describe and understand the experience of being in a landscape with a camera in order to explore an alternative politics of landscape representation that does not presuppose subject-object dualism or any specific way of looking. This alternative politic endeavours to understand the human-technology-world relation within the context of landscape photography, specifically interrogating the role of the camera in relation to that of myself as a photographer and that of the environment. In the following sections I provide some theoretical background to the abovementioned three themes in order to

provide a theoretical framework for my understanding of being in a place with a camera, which will in turn inform the development of a ‘practitioner framework’ (Candy & Edmonds, 2011: 127) for the representation of place, which is achieved through the photographing and eventual displaying of the work.

## 2. THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

### 2.1. Phenomenologies

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One of the tenets of a phenomenological inquiry has been to disclose the conditions for the possibility of experience—an intentional relation obtains among experiencer, experienced, and experience – although phenomenologists have disagreed about what these exact conditions may be, the best means for disclosing them, and the limits of the inquiry (Davis, 2007: 118).

According to David W. Smith (2013: 3, 44), phenomenology, as a discipline within philosophy, is concerned with the structures of consciousness – the appearance of things, or things as they appear in human experience, thus the meanings things have in our experience. It is, however, also a movement within philosophy where all disciplines in philosophy are examined with a phenomenological approach. This movement, although founded by Edmund Husserl around the turn of the century, has developed into a range of more or less disparate approaches (Ash & Simpson, 2014: 50). Although a

full discussion of all these approaches falls beyond the scope of the present study, I will briefly discuss key concepts within classical Husserlian phenomenology with the aim of showing how it provides the basis for further developments, such as specifically existential phenomenology and hermeneutic phenomenology, which have been most influential in the study of place from a phenomenological perspective. Contemporary phenomenology of place provides the basis for my photographing in specific places and is therefore important to explore in some depth.

A key Husserlian concept that is somewhat contested<sup>5</sup> today within and outside of phenomenology circles, is intentionality, “the property of consciousness that it is a consciousness of or about something” (Smith, 2013: 4, 44). In classic Husserlian phenomenology, intentional acts occur in perception, thought, images, and language and “these make up the meaning or content of a given experience, and are distinct from the things they present or mean” (Smith, 2013: 14, 44). The human subject therefore

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<sup>5</sup> In short, Husserlian intentionality is accused of being anthropocentric and upon final analysis, guilty of the dualism of subject/object that much

phenomenological thought, including Husserl, has argued against (see Ash & Simpson, 2014, for an overview of this critique of classical phenomenology).

experiences external reality as internal representation. It is this representational character of experience that forms the basis of criticisms of Husserlian phenomenology, but this will be addressed later. First there are some critical concepts that form the basis of phenomenology that must be understood.

Classical phenomenology studies, describes, analyses, and interprets the various forms of experience as well as the conditions that enable intentionality, such as embodiment, cultural contexts, language, and social practices (Smith, 2013: 5, 44). What makes Husserl's understanding of intentionality ground-breaking is precisely this distinction between the content of intentionality (the meaning) and the object itself. It is the content that makes the intentional act object-directed (McIntyre & Smith, 1989: 155) even though it remains object-independent and conception-dependent (McIntyre & Smith, 1989: 150-151). There are therefore many different ways that a subject can intend (be conscious of) objects and many forms of meaning.<sup>6</sup> Perception, imagination, and memory, for

instance, are different forms of intentionality with different relationships to the intended objects whether they are present or absent, defined or indeterminate (Sokolowski, 2000: 66).

These ways of intending, or being conscious of a thing, however, are not merely presentations or memories of the thing, but the thing itself, as Jan Patocka (2018: 222) states, "the real thing itself, in persona, is the thing of our perception and our immediate practice". The thing itself, however, also transcends the various ways that we can be conscious of it. Husserl distinguishes between the object and the content of the "intentional act". The object therefore has a certain nature in and of itself (McIntyre & Smith, 1989: 167), which transcends that content. Transcendence is described by Patocka (2018: 153) as "that which is somehow present in lived experience, yet at the same time goes beyond the limits of being absolutely contained within it, that which cannot be given apart from lived experience and yet is not part of it".

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<sup>6</sup> McIntyre and Smith (1989: 156) stated that the one fault of Husserl's analyses was that he treated specific forms of mental representation and forms of

meaning as more universal than what they were. More in-depth analyses based on Husserlian principles reveal different structures for different forms.

For perception to be intentional, it must be experienced as meaningful, and such meaning is not generated by the perception of an object itself alone. Besides the relation of object to other objects in an environment, the realisation that the object transcends one's perception thereof suggests a horizon of possibilities of further perceptions. One's understanding of an object constitutes that object as having properties that "further experience may or may not confirm" (Patocka, 2018: 174). Therefore, one's previous experiences together with possibilities of future experiences constitute the object, i.e. gives it meaning (Patocka, 2018: 174). To constitute an object in experience does not mean that the real world is brought into being in experience. Rather it means that "experience gives it meaning" (Patocka, 2018: 179). "Thus, phenomenology features a study of meaning, in a wide sense that includes more than what is expressed in language" (Smith, 2013: 16).

Some of Husserl's followers have accused Husserl's phenomenology of being too close to Kant's transcendental idealism (Johnson, 2013: 6) because in his structure of intentionality (because we can never exhaust the possibilities of experience of any given object) we can never completely confirm whether extra-mental reality does actually

exist. According to Ronald McIntyre and David Smith (1989), however, it is precisely "[t]his inadequacy in our cognitive or perceptual powers" that confirms that what we call real is not merely created in our minds: "We ourselves constitute the physical world as transcendent of our experiences and independent of our consciousness of it. What better proof could we have that we have correctly constituted it so than that we can never experience it completely?" (Smith, 1989: 175).

The fact that we can have different (revisable) conceptions of the same object, but that the object is independent of such conceptions is developed by Husserl in his concept of the *Lifeworld*, which Trigg (2012) summarises as "the world experienced in its everyday, taken-for-granted unity". This includes the person and the group's beliefs about the world based on previous experiences.

The lifeworld, which is therefore subjective-relative,<sup>7</sup> is the ground on which any experience is built, including the formation of objective knowledge and science (Beyer, 2015: 25).

The lifeworld can in short be said to form the pre-given background against which “my practice of act-ascription and all constitutive achievements based upon that practice make sense in the first place, and in terms of which they get their ultimate justification” (Beyer, 2015: 23).

While Husserl uses such stable words such as “ground” to describe the lifeworld, he also emphasised that any lifeworld of a person or group is constantly subject to revision, even though it is mostly not consciously reflected upon – in the background rather than the foreground. This notion of the background to conscious experience moves phenomenology from a focus on the structure of

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<sup>7</sup> Beyer (2015) contended that some of the most important and most influential implications of this concept is the role of intersubjectivity and shared experience within social groups in structuring meaning and understanding. Beyer explained that “the respective lifeworld is claimed to ‘predelineate a ‘world-horizon’ of potential future experiences that are to be (more or less) expected for a given group member at a given time, under various conditions, where the resulting sequences of anticipated experiences can be looked upon as corresponding to different ‘possible worlds and environments’” (Beyer, 2015: 24). The *Lifeworld*

consciousness to less than conscious realms, by acknowledging that experience shades off into less overtly conscious phenomena (Smith, 2013: 7).<sup>8</sup>

Husserl’s intentionality therefore implies a “transcendental idealism”, which many phenomenologists have since moved away from. Even though Husserl sought a position between idealism and realism, his emphasis on “internal” consciousness and the bracketing out of the real world has been criticised for leaning too far towards idealism. According to Smith (2013: 18), Heidegger, for instance, believes that “we and our activities are always ‘in the world’, our being is being-in-the-world, so we do not study our activities by bracketing the world, rather we interpret our activities and the meaning things have for us by looking to our contextual relations to things in the world”.

is a complex concept that is often ambiguously employed and interpreted (Beyer, 2015: 23). A full discussion of this concept falls outside the scope of this study.

<sup>8</sup> A phenomenon is defined by Van Manen (2014: 66) as “an event or a lived-through experience as it shows itself or as it gives itself when it makes an appearance in our awareness”.

Merleau-Ponty endeavoured throughout his career to develop a philosophy that was not based on consciousness, and therefore developed a critique of the concept of intentionality (Davis, 2007: 127). William Hamrick and Jan van der Veken (2011: 17) note that this critique resulted in an expansion of intentionality from consciousness to motor-intentionality in which the lived body (as opposed to the objective body) takes part. Hamrick and Van der Veken state that it is through motor-intentionality that “the lived body, also called the ‘knowing body’, becomes a system of powers for exploring and making sense of its world. It becomes an ‘I can’ in addition to ‘I think’” (Hamrick & Van der Veken, 2011: 17). In this framework the lived-body is much more integrated and intertwined with the world, or ‘lifeworld’. As Van Manen (2014: 62) explains, a contemporary approach to phenomenology does not “deny our naturalistic sensibilities but is interested in investigating how they are affected and constituted and how our languages, assumptions, temporal and bodily existence, and habituations shape our experiences, beliefs, and affects.”

To summarise, rather than limiting its investigations to human consciousness, phenomenology has branched out to explore human

existence, with, for example, Heidegger exploring how “phenomenology reveals our situation in a context of equipment and in being-with-others” (Smith, 2013: 18), and Merleau-Ponty developing “a rich variety of phenomenology emphasizing the role of the body in human experience (Smith 2013: 21). Although there are many other perspectives, Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty are highly influential in more contemporary thinking about place and landscape, as will become apparent in the following sections.

Phenomenologists, according to David Morris (2004: 58), seek to understand *being* and upon what our being depends. Heidegger’s main contribution to philosophy, according to Hyland (2016: 31), was to develop an attitude of questioning. Finding and formulating concrete answers to these questions are, however, less the purpose than the questioning attitude and ongoing process of developing responses to questions. This attitude is also evident from the following passage in which Morris summarises the purposes and problems of phenomenology:

Husserl’s opening is deepened in Heidegger’s pursuit of being-in-the-world, in Sartre’s criticism of the transcendence of the ego, in Merleau-Ponty’s discovery of intentionality in movement and the

'body subject'. In short, phenomenology ends up trying to reinstall the thinker in the world. It is well known, though, that phenomenologists—and anti-phenomenologists— keep detecting various closures within phenomenology, a failure to get beyond the subject to something other upon which our being depends (Morris, 2004: 58).

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## 2.2. Theories of being

Concerning content, phenomenology is the science of the being of beings – ontology. In our elucidation of the tasks of ontology, the necessity arose for a fundamental ontology that would have as its theme that which is ontologically and ontically distinctive, namely Dasein. This must be done in such a way that our ontology confronts the cardinal problem, the question of the meaning of being in general (Heidegger, 1996: 33).

For Heidegger (1996: 33) the question of what it means to 'be' is regarded as the foundational theme of philosophy. Traditional philosophy distinguishes between 'being as such'<sup>9</sup> – ontology, and the 'being of things', the ontic – the domain of metaphysics. Whether or not there is or should be a distinction between these is a matter for debate that is, for instance, one of the main points on which Maurice Merleau-Ponty's thought departs from that of Heidegger.<sup>10</sup> In the following discussion I briefly highlight some notions of *being* first formulated by Heidegger but developed and modified by Merleau-Ponty and others, especially Malpas's (2009; 2011) reinterpretation of Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty in relation to experience of place.

### 2.2.1 *Dasein*, or the 'placedness' of being

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<sup>9</sup> Heidegger takes the ancient Greek conceptions of Being as starting point for his analysis. The question of being, for Heidegger, is the most basic and concrete question. In the introduction to *Being and Time*, Heidegger stressed the importance of establishing from the outset that the being of being, which is often capitalised in secondary literature – Being – is not an entity itself, a kind of higher-order being. When concerned with ontology, one is concerned with the nature of Being rather than the nature of beings. The being of beings, on the other hand functions on the ontic level. This is the ontological difference. Western thought, at the time of Heidegger's writing of *Being and Time*, has a history of onticizing Being, a problem which Heidegger set out to address

(Wheeler, 2011: 9). The question of Being can therefore be simplified as "What does 'to exist' mean?" (Wheeler, 2011: 8) rather than "Does something exist?".

<sup>10</sup> Malpas (2006: 312-313), however, suggested that even Heidegger in his later work, proposed that this distinction between beings and being should not be seen as an ontological difference, but rather just as "the difference".

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger's method of enquiry into the question of *being* is to make human being his focus through his concept of *Dasein*.<sup>11</sup> Heidegger's project is to see if he can learn something about being-as-such through a careful analysis of human being, as a particular instance of existence. His hope is that the universal will manifest in the particular instance. Although Heidegger's aim with *Being and Time* was not subjectivist, he acknowledged later that among the reasons that *Being and Time* failed was that "the attempt and the path it chose confronts the danger of unwillingly becoming merely another entrenchment of subjectivity" (Malpas, 2006: 157). Heidegger's enquiry into being develops from an analysis from *Dasein's* perspective, to an analysis from the perspective of Being. The questioning of being changes from "What is the meaning of

Being?" (Wheeler, 2011: 67) in *Being and Time* to "How does Being essentially unfold?" (Wheeler, 2011: 67) in his later works (roughly since the late 1940s). While in *Being and Time* Heidegger's understanding of being in terms of *Dasein* was based on hierarchical relations, where spatiality, for instance, is derived from temporality, his later thinking develops into an understanding of mutually dependent, if not fully symmetrical, relations. Malpas (2006: 312) explains that "in Heidegger's later thinking, human being is seen as already gathered into the happening of being as such, and so as a necessary element within that happening, but as, in no way, the basis or ground of that happening".

Even though Heidegger might not have achieved the specific results he aimed for in *Being and Time*, his analysis of *Dasein*<sup>12</sup> remains

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<sup>11</sup> Heidegger's capitalisation.

<sup>12</sup> Heidegger explicitly cautions that *Dasein* is not the same as the biological human being, nor the person. Wheeler (2011: 10) explained that it is important to keep *Dasein* on the right side of the ontological difference. The standard view of *Dasein* in secondary literature, according to Wheeler, is that *Dasein* should be taken as an entity in the same way as language is an entity – "as a way of life shared by the members of some community" (2011: 10). Heidegger's argument is that *Dasein* is ontically unique<sup>12</sup> in that, in its being, it alone among beings is explicitly concerned with its own being (Heidegger, 1996: 10). Heidegger's

initial reasoning follows then that the only way to enquire into Being as such is therefore through an analysis of *Dasein*.

There are two initial characteristics of *Dasein* sketched out by Heidegger in *Being and Time* that justifies his concern with *Dasein* above any other kind of being: Firstly, *Dasein* operates in its "everyday activities with an understanding of Being (albeit implicit and vague), which makes it pre-ontological (Wheeler, 2011: 11). Furthermore, *Dasein's* being is one of always-being-mine. Human

valuable and influential and especially relevant in a discussion of human being in relation to place. Although the present discussion hardly provides a complete exposition of this concept, I highlight the aspects of Heidegger's argument that are relevant to 'being' in relation to specific places and technologies. For this purpose, Malpas's interrogation of Heidegger's thinking about place in *Heidegger's Topology* (2006) provides many useful insights. From the outset, Malpas interpreted Heidegger's conception of *Dasein* as being in essence about the 'placedness' of being.

According to Malpas (2006: 47), "by focusing on existence as *Dasein*, Heidegger was able to draw attention to the way in which existence is indeed a matter of situatedness – to exist, to be "in the world," is to have a concrete "there"<sup>13</sup>. In Malpas's interpretation, it is this basic structure of human being as 'there-being' that points to an understanding of Heidegger's thinking throughout his career as

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beings are therefore "the nuclei of lives laying themselves out" (Wheeler, 2011: 12).

<sup>13</sup> While Malpas makes a convincing, lengthy argument for using the translation "there-being" (Wheeler, 2011: 12) instead of the German phrase, as is common

topological and returning to place – an understanding of Being as situated (Malpas, 2006: 305).

The importance of this structure lies in the implication that "[t]his being does not and never has the kind of being of what is merely objectively present within the world" (Heidegger, 1996: 40). It is for this reason that Heidegger prefers to use the concept of *Dasein* instead of "existence", as he takes the original meaning of existence to be "objective presence" (Heidegger, 1996: 39). Human beings therefore always exist both subjectively and objectively. As Malpas (2006: 52) explains it, "we thus find ourselves first of all enmeshed in a world, and so in a set of relationships, and it is only subsequent to this that we begin to separate out a sense of ourselves and a sense of things as they are apart from us".

### 2.2.2 Being-in-the-world as dwelling

Heidegger derives his understanding of being-in from the etymology of the word "in", which he traces to "*innan-*", to live, *habitare*, to

practice in secondary literature, I elect to retain the term "*Dasein*" as this emphasises the understanding of the concept as referring to an entity rather than an attribute of human being. Malpas's insistence on using 'there-being' draws attention to the 'there' (*Da*) of *Dasein*.

dwell. “An” means I am used to, familiar with, I take care of something. *Dasein* therefore has the formal constitution of being-in-the-world. For Heidegger (1996: 51), Being-in is an essential quality of *Dasein* that is not an optional addition, as Heidegger (1996: 51) states, “It is not the case that human being ‘is’, and then on top of that has a relation of being to the ‘world’ which it sometimes takes upon itself”.

The ‘world’ of being-in is a world of other beings, which *Dasein* encounters in so far as it is open to such encounters. In turn, “other beings can only ‘meet up’ ‘with’ *Dasein* because they are able to show themselves of their own accord within a world” (Heidegger, 1996: 54). There are different ways in which *Dasein* can be open to other beings. In *Being and Time* Heidegger articulated two fundamental modes in which other beings can be present for *Dasein*: as ready-to-hand or as present-to-hand. These two modes of being are key concepts in Heidegger’s thought as it structures much of his subsequent arguments later in his career. Being ready-to-hand is a mode of being where *Dasein* is not overtly aware of itself or of its surroundings as separate objects, but is rather immersed in everyday activities and projects, during which objects and environments

function as tools. Heidegger’s understanding of the human use of such ready-to-hand entities as operating on a pre-rational and pre-cognitive level “within an overall system of relevance” (1996: 54.) has been highly influential in postphenomenological thinking, as will be shown in Section 2.5. It is only in the break-down of equipment, or in the philosophical mode (see Footnote 7), that things become ‘present-at-hand’, a mode in which *Dasein* takes in the object as a thing-in-itself, and in the process becomes aware of the self, separate from the object (Wheeler, 2011: 18).

There is, however, a third mode of ‘un-readiness-to-hand’ that occurs in the breakdown or malfunctioning, unsuitability or missing-ness of equipment, or any such problem that interferes with the task to which

*Dasein* is directed. In this mode, other beings<sup>14</sup> do not yet become present-at-hand but rather become problems for *Dasein* to solve. *Dasein* then becomes a problem-solver in having to fix malfunctioning tools, re-appropriate objects for new purposes, or having to find new tools for a specific task.<sup>15</sup>

Heidegger therefore proposes that *Dasein* is, in its everyday being,<sup>16</sup> task orientated. In this way, *Dasein* finds itself “thrown” into a world that is not of its own making, yet matters to it. We find ourselves caring about our own being, in a world for which we care in some way or another. The way that we ‘care’ about the world is structured by our involvement with the world in terms of the mode of being.

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<sup>14</sup> With other beings here I am not referring to other humans, although there is a sense in which other people can become ‘tools’ in the projects of *Dasein*, especially as part of the “Framework” (*Gestell*) of modern technology, which Heidegger critiqued.

<sup>15</sup> The breakdown of equipment in existing or in new tasks that *Dasein* is involved in, where solutions have not been pre-established, is one way that the world is ‘lit up’ and can be experienced in new ways. This interplay between the various modes of *Dasein*’s being is an interesting perspective on creative practice where the artist/photographer constantly sets him/herself new projects with new problems, which ‘lights-up’ the world in different ways.

<sup>16</sup> The natural attitude as opposed to the philosophical attitude. Sokolowski (2000: 42) is helpful here to understand this distinction when he explained that “[t]he natural attitude is the focus we have when we are involved in our original,

Our normal everyday being-in-the-world is a network of involvements (*Bewandtnis*) that implies various relations between *Dasein* and other entities (Wheeler, 2011: 15). It is such a field of involvements, or networks<sup>17</sup> of relations, that constitutes *Dasein*’s ‘world’.

Another important factor in how we encounter the world – how things are revealed to us – is Heidegger’s notion of *stimmung*, which is mostly translated as ‘mood’. A mood is neither purely caused by external (objective) factors, nor purely a projection onto the world of internally generated feelings and attitudes. Bryan Bannon (2011: 339) explained that “for Heidegger, *Dasein* always only has beings

world-directed stance, when we intend things, situations, facts, and any other kinds of objects. The natural attitude is, we might say, the default perspective, the one we start off from, the one we are in originally. We do not move into it from anything more basic. The phenomenological attitude, on the other hand, is the focus we have when we reflect upon the natural attitude and all the intentionalities that occur within it. It is within the phenomenological attitude that we carry out philosophical analyses. The phenomenological attitude is also sometimes called the transcendental attitude.”

<sup>17</sup> “Large-scale holistic networks of interconnected-relational significance” (Wheeler, 2011: 25).

disclosed to it through how it is attuned to its surroundings through a mood, such that other beings appear to them in a particular way". Moods are therefore a result of relations between "Dasein's world – meaning the horizon of significance in which *Dasein* finds itself – the thing encountered, and Dasein itself" (2011: 339).

Heidegger's notion of 'world' is therefore not merely a collection of objects that *Dasein* encounters in objective space.<sup>18</sup> *Dasein's* spatiality is structured not by objective space as much as by this network of involvements that constitutes its world. *Dasein's* 'world' is taken to mean its cultural and historical context through which other people and beings (as well as the self) become intelligible or are 'disclosed'. This is a complex interaction between *Dasein's* 'thrownness' into the world and its projection of his own being onto the world, forming systems of sense-making. For Heidegger (2001: 129), language is the primary system of sense-making, to such an extent that he calls language the "house of being". We have to go

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<sup>18</sup> In its Being-in-the-world, *Dasein* encounters itself and understands itself 'ontologically in terms of those beings and their being which it itself is not, but which it encounters "within" its "world"' (Heidegger, 1996: 55).

<sup>19</sup> Although Malpas defended much of Heidegger's philosophy, he remained critical of his politics. He, however, argued that abhorrence of Heidegger's

through the "house" to reach things (Heidegger 2001: 129). The relationship between embodied perception and linguistic sense-making remains open to question, and, as will be shown later in this chapter, is a fertile issue that continues to be particularly intriguing within the context of photographic representation of landscape.

As Michael Wheeler (2011: 23) explained, for Heidegger, "the Being-in dimension of Being-in-the-world cannot be thought of as a merely spatial relation in some sense that might be determined by a GPS device..." Heidegger uses the term dwelling to refer to the characteristic way that *Dasein* is in-the-world (Wheeler, 2011: 21). In dwelling, *Dasein* – human being – is essentially situated in place.

The Heideggerian<sup>19</sup> concept of dwelling has been highly influential within fields such as architecture (see, for example, Christian Norberg-Schultz, 1985) and human geography (see, for example, Tilley, 1994; Ingold, 2000; Tuan, 2001). It is precisely the use of this

politics does not warrant an offhand dismissal of his philosophy (Malpas, 2006: 21). This position is supported by Hyland (2016).

concept outside of philosophy, particularly by Norberg-Schultz (1985, 1979; 1971), that has attracted much criticism, mainly due to the inherently positive value it assigns to place and “a desire for a nostalgic return to pre-modern conditions of dwelling” (Haddad, 2010: 98), which tends to exclude and even discriminate against displaced people. Malpas (2006: 17-19)<sup>20</sup> argues against the understanding of notions of place and dwelling as “politically reactionary because they are somehow intrinsically exclusionary” (Malpas, 2006: 20). Malpas shows that critics of Heidegger’s notion of dwelling fail to engage in any depth with his original texts, and therefore miss that Heidegger developed a conception of both place and identity that is outside of the views commonly found in traditional Western philosophy. It is worth quoting Malpas at length here as he explained his take on how Heidegger viewed identity:

Typically, we think of identity as directing us to the thing as it stands apart from other things in its own self-same nature. This sense of identity has a founding role in metaphysical thinking—being is

understood as itself founded in the idea of the thing in its self-identity—in its autonomous self-sameness. Heidegger’s account displaces identity from this founding role as it also displaces the understanding of identity. As Heidegger presents the situation, identity is never just a matter of the self-sameness of the thing but always directs us toward the thing in its relationality—to the thing as it both gathers and is itself gathered (Malpas, 2014: 19).

Identity is therefore not fixed or static and pre-determined, but rather “dynamic – that is, as something constantly being worked out, and as encompassing an essential difference and differentiation” (Malpas, 2014: 20). Heidegger’s treatment of place should be understood as similarly relational and dynamic, rather than “as an essentially deterministic, exclusionary, and ‘nostalgic’ concept” (Malpas, 2014: 20). This more contemporary interpretation of Heidegger’s ideas by thinkers such as Malpas and Rose (2012) tends to emphasise the continual, incomplete understanding of the notion of dwelling (a process that is also not fully controlled by human

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<sup>20</sup> Malpas (2006: 17-19) provided a convincing rebuttal of the criticisms of dwelling levelled by Doreen Massey (1983: 64, 67), Harvey (1989: 209), and Leach (1999: 151) specifically.

existence) and therefore offers productive ways of exploring landscape and place photographically.

Malpas (2006; 2014) and Wheeler (2011: 69) both note a reinterpretation of the notion of dwelling in Heidegger's later thinking, in which place plays an increasingly important role. To dwell is to have a place where one feels at home, even if this place is not fixed and is multiple. Rather than a notion of identity being rooted in place, dwelling represents being located in a "set of sense-making practices and structures with which it is familiar" (Wheeler, 2011: 69).

Dwelling, as the mode of human being-in-the-world, furthermore refers to an attitude of care, of sparing, and preserving, which refers to "allowing [the world] to be and become" (Seamon, 2000); to be disclosed and to disclose itself. This process of disclosure, or unconcealing, is variously called the 'happening', or the 'event' (*Ereignis*), which takes 'place' in place. This event is poetically described by Heidegger (1993: 174) in *The Origin of the Work of Art* as a strife between "World" and "Earth", which could be interpreted as a constant (benign) strife between the 'concealedness' of reality and the systems of human sense-making. For Heidegger (Heidegger, 1993: 174), "The earth is the spontaneous forthcoming of that which

is continually self-secluding and to that extent sheltering and concealing. World and earth are essentially different from one another and yet are never separated. The world grounds itself on the earth, and earth juts through world". In this strife for intelligibility, the earth conceals as much as it offers up, as Iain Thomson (2015: 52) explains, "In this way, 'earth' both supports and resists 'world,' both tantalizingly eliciting, always informing, and yet also partly escaping all our attempts to finally stabilize our intelligible worlds, to assign a firm shape to things once and for all".

In later texts, however, the "Event", or *ereignen*, is described as an opening in which the fourfold is gathered. Hofstadter (in Heidegger, 2001: xx), in his introduction to the English translation of *Language, Poetry, Thought* explains that:

Thus *ereignen* comes to mean, in [Heidegger's] writing, the joint process by which the four of the fourfold are able, first, to come out into the light and clearing of truth, and thus each to exist in its own truthful way, and secondly, to exist in appropriation of and to each other, belonging together in the round dance of their being; and what is more, this mutual appropriation becomes the very process by which the emergence into the light and clearing

occurs, for it happens through the sublimely simple play of their mutual monitoring.

From Hofstadter's explanation, an understanding of the Event as constantly becoming; in motion, shifting; almost shimmering, emerges. The fourfold mentioned in the quotation above refers to the four elements that make up the world: Earth, Sky, Mortals, and the Divinities. One cannot experience or think the one without also seeing the others – hence the reference to the “appropriation” of and to each other.

In Malpas's interpretation, he captures the role of language in the Event: “The happening of world occurs first in the calling of language, in the gathering of the thing, in the opening up of the time-space that is also the ‘taking-place’ of place” (Malpas, 2006: 306). The ‘place’ at issue here, in the way that Heidegger uses it – as the opening, or clearing – refers to place in the ontological and perhaps abstract sense. Yet, it is perhaps an admonition that things, and beings, perhaps even *Being*, can only be understood in context – in specific places. This notion of the importance of the specific

understanding in terms of experience within a specific place, as opposed to the abstract, generalised insight, is something Heidegger started to work with but did not take far enough, according to contemporary theorists<sup>21</sup>, but more about this later. For now, it is necessary to clarify what is meant by ‘place’ going forward in this study and then to consider place in phenomenological terms. It is important to emphasise the centrality of place in phenomenological thinking.

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<sup>21</sup> See, amongst others, Creswell (2009) and Ash and Simpson (2014).

## 2.3. Phenomenology of place

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Just as phenomenology, in its appeal to lived experience, would emerge as abstracted, partial, and disembodied without being situated in place, so the term “place” would be vague and cryptic without being thematized through phenomenology (Trigg, 2012: 2).

In the quote above, Trigg (2012) articulates the spiral structure of the mutual importance of place as a philosophical concept and phenomenological thinking. It is for this reason that phenomenology has maintained a sustained interest in place, and place thinkers commonly employ a phenomenological approach.

Following Heidegger’s influence, place theorists such as Malpas and Casey tend to work with two prominent senses of the word “place”, often differentiated as “place-as-such” and “place”, or, as Casey uses it, “Place” and “places” (Brockelman, 2003: 49): Place-as-such, or Place capitalised, is the ontologically significant sense that

Wheeler (2011: 31) describes as “the open region in which things are gathered and disclosed”.

Place (uncapitalised) can be variously understood as location, focus point, position, or bounded area (to name but a few), depending on the context.<sup>22</sup> Even so, fundamental to the idea of place, according to Malpas (1999a: 33), would seem to be “the idea of an open and yet bounded realm within which the things of the world can appear and within which events can ‘take place’”. Within this description, both the notion of place or location as a co-ordinate point within a heterogeneous space, such as a co-ordinate on a map (the Cartesian notion of place and space) and place as a “particular locale or as that ‘within which’ someone or something resides” applies, even though these two concepts are directly opposed to each other. A further crucial point of clarification is that, although place and space are generally used in opposition to each other, place understood in terms of abode or locale always stands in some relation to space.

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<sup>22</sup> Malpas (1999b: 22) argued that the richness and complexity of the term should not be limited by too narrow a definition, and therefore elected to keep the meaning open.

Some sense of space is always needed to understand place (Malpas, 1999a: 33).

Place, in the sense of locale, is thus dependent on *Dasein's* sense of spatiality, which, according to Malpas's reinterpretation of Heidegger, is mutually determined by *Dasein's* relations to other objects and people in everyday task-driven living, and the world as it is arranged in objective space (objects arranged in heterogeneous space). As the 'there' or 'Da' of *Dasein*, place has ontological primacy. It is where *being* happens, where it 'takes place'. Malpas draws his understanding from Heidegger's later conception of place, "which appears in various guises as the 'Da' of *Dasein*, as the clearing, *die Lichtung*, that is the happening of the truth of being, as the gathering of the fourfold in the Ereignis" (Malpas, 2006: 306). The various elements (the fourfold) that constitute place in this sense are in turn constituted only through the interrelations between themselves and the opening or clearing provided by place (Malpas, 2006: 306).

As Malpas (2006: 269) explains, "To say that 'I am' is to say that I dwell. To be human, then, 'to be on the earth as a mortal', is to remain, to stay, to be in a certain relation to a place". This relation

to place also involves a certain relation to time and space. Malpas (2006: 269) uses the concept of dwelling to show that it is through place – our being-in-the-world – that we can experience and relate to time and space.

The phenomenology of place, as understood by contemporary thinkers such as Casey and Malpas, is therefore by and large an existential phenomenological approach to place. According to Trigg (2012: 4), such an approach to place encompasses the realist and constructivist approaches to place, neither of which provides a sufficient account of place on its own. Questions of meaning and existence are explored with the understanding that it is always placed.

One aspect that Heidegger famously chose not to explore, even though he acknowledged the importance thereof, was the fact of *Dasein's* embodiment. It is Merleau-Ponty's contention that we are in-the-world only by virtue of being embodied selves and we are embodied selves only by virtue of being-in-the-world. With reference to the embodied self, Casey (2001a: 406) states that, "In effect, there

is no place without self;<sup>23</sup> and no self without place". Contemporary phenomenology of place could be generally described as oscillating between postmodern and anti-modern perspectives, in which body-mind dualism is contested through an emphasis on embodied-emplaced experience. Both Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty remain highly influential in the work of contemporary place thinkers such as Ingold, Casey, Trigg, Malpas, Morris, Rose, and Wiley, to name but a few.

Although a preoccupation with place is often criticised as harbouring a nostalgic attitude towards the past and exclusionary conservative politics in that identities are seen to be too strongly tied to, or even rooted in place (Malpas, 2014: 16), contemporary thinkers such as those listed above conceptualise place itself as open and constantly evolving, which in turn then flows towards a more open understanding of identity as well.

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<sup>23</sup> "Self", in the sense that Casey used it here, is defined by Casey (2001: 405) as having to do with "the agency and identity of the geographical subject". Body, in Casey's understanding "is what links this self to lived place in its sensible and perceptible features" (Casey, 2001: 405).

## 2.4. Being-with: Moving away from anthropocentrism

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In Heidegger's discussion of the relational space of equipment, as mentioned in Section 2.2.2, it is important to understand that this is also a necessarily public mode of spatiality (Malpas, 2006: 86) in that things and people relate to each other in everyday practice, "and thus it also directs attention to the way in which being-there (*Dasein*) is as much a being-with others<sup>24</sup> ('Mitsein', 'Mitdasein') as it is a being-amidst or being-alongside things ('Sein bei')" (Malpas, 2006: 86). Heidegger's discussion of Being-with in *Being and Time*, however, focuses on being-with-other *Dasein*. He explains that "others" here refers to those who are similar to oneself, rather than different. David Gauthier (2004: 41-42) interprets it thus: "In Heidegger's view, the presence of other human beings is permanently etched into the fabric of our existential constitution. That is to say, human Being-with is constitutive of *Dasein's* way of

<sup>24</sup> The use of the uncapitalised "other" refers to this notion of other subjects such as ourselves, with whom we identify, which is a different meaning to the capitalised "Other" referring to difference and "Otherness".

being. By extension, others are not existentially external to the boundaries that demarcate the boundaries of the self”.

It is important to note that this notion of the world, for Heidegger, implies that because Being-in-the-world is a being of immersion in relations that develop towards the achievement of *Dasein*'s projects, for Heidegger, in *Being and Time*, this mode of being is unique to *Dasein* and cannot be extended to animals or things. In his words, “Two beings which are objectively present within the world and are, moreover, worldless in themselves, can never ‘touch’ each other, neither can ‘be’ ‘together with’ the other” (Heidegger, 1996: 52). Malpas, however, describes a turning away from such anthropocentric perspectives in Heidegger’s later thought, encapsulated in *The Thing*, originally delivered as a lecture to the Bayerischen Akademie der Schönen Künste, shortly after the end of World War II (1971b) and later in *Building Dwelling Thinking* (1971a). In *Building Dwelling Thinking*, “things” are described as being in relation to each other in terms of how they gather things to them. Commenting on Heidegger’s familiar example of the bridge, Malpas (2006: 246) writes that:

If we look to the gathering that occurs in relation to another thing that is also connected with the bridge, say the surveyor’s theodolite as employed in the bridge’s construction and maintenance, we can see that the bridge is itself gathered there, and gathered in a way different from the gathering that the bridge itself enables. As the bridge shows up in relation to the theodolite, it appears in terms of the instantiation of certain spatial and geometric properties in relation, not only to its internal structure, but to the way it fits into a larger mapping or plan.

In this passage it is notable that Malpas examines how one thing is revealed through another thing sequentially, but at the same time, two things reveal each other, or ‘unconceal’ each other simultaneously. In later Heidegger, “things” are thus understood as actively gathering the fourfold. To be clear, however, this gathering in the Event, as explained in the previous section, implies a relation of all four elements, including mortals. It is this gathering of the fourfold that distinguishes “things” from “objects”. Objects remain undifferentiated points in homogenous space, or scientific understanding (Heidegger, 2001: 168). In Heidegger’s later thought the equipmental spatiality initially proposed in *Being and Time* is augmented with the relationality of the elements of earth, sky, mortals, and divinities, none of which is the ground for the other and

without hierarchy. If one accepts this interpretation, things can be 'with' other things, but only if also in relation to earth and sky (nature), as well as the divinities and mortals (human culture). This is an idea taken up by subsequent postphenomenological thinkers, which I return to in Section 2.5.

There is, however, another sense of being-with or *Mitsein* developed later by Merleau-Ponty and further explored by Morris. Merleau-Ponty develops the notion of Being-in-the-world further through a rigorous examination of human perception. Morris (2004: 2) refers to Merleau-Ponty as showing that "analysis of perception always amounts to analysis of the perceiver's existence" yet, at the same time, to be, is to be perceived". The matter at issue here is bodily, sensory perception; not an esoteric notion of disembodied consciousness. Human perception (and by extension then also human existence) is therefore mutually dependent on body and world. Merleau-Ponty's investigation eventually leads him to develop

the term "flesh", which is "neither some sort of ethereal matter nor is it a life force that runs through everything. Rather, it is a notion which is formed in order to express the intertwining of the sensate and the sensible, their intertwining and their reversibility" (Flynn, 2004: 29).

Alphonso Lingis, in the introduction to his translation of the Merleau-Ponty's *Visible and the Invisible* (1968: LIV), understands the concept of flesh as elemental,<sup>25</sup> and related it to the body "inasmuch as it is the visible seer, the audible hearer, the tangible touch— the sensitive sensible: inasmuch as in it is accomplished an equivalence of sensibility and sensible thing". This reversibility makes intersubjectivity possible in that, because I can see you seeing me, I can also see you looking at the landscape<sup>26</sup>, which is also my landscape (Merleau-Ponty, 1968: 142). Yet, there is also an anonymity in the flesh in that

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<sup>25</sup> In an explanation of his use of the concept "elemental", Merleau-Ponty (1968: 139) stated that "to designate it [flesh] we should need the old term 'element' . . . in the sense of a general thing, midway between the spatio-temporal

individual and the idea, a sort of incarnate principle that brings a style of being wherever there is a fragment of being".

<sup>26</sup> Landscape here refers to the spatial arrangement of things and places around me – the environment.

[i]t is not I who sees, not he who sees, because an anonymous visibility inhabits both of us, a vision in general, in virtue of that primordial property that belongs to the flesh, being here and now, of radiating everywhere and forever, being an individual, of being also a dimension and a universal (Merleau-Ponty, 1968: 142).

The concept of flesh is thus true to human experience of being part of the world.

Flesh is, however, not reducible to cause-and-effect interactions between world and embodied being. The interaction that constitutes flesh is rather a constant reversal of passivity and activity between the perceived and perceiver. Merleau-Ponty (1968: 27) writes in the *Visible and the Invisible* that “the stimuli of perception are not the causes of the perceived world, that they are rather its developers or its releasers”. Here we therefore find some acknowledgement of a form of activity attributed to things such as mountains and other inanimate objects. Morris (2004) interprets the concept of flesh and the various ways that it is explored in *The Visible And Invisible*, as implying that we are with the world (which includes other human beings) in such a way that without the world, we ‘are not’. This is still an echo of Heidegger’s understanding of being-with, but Morris

(2004) goes further to explain that we perceive with the world. It is only through/with the world that we can perceive – light, heat, matter, air, in flesh – that makes perception possible, but also allows us to differentiate ourselves from the world, even as we discover that we are also part of the world.

Morris’ notion of “crossing” is useful here. Crossing refers to both senses of the word: mixing and traversing: “[c]rossing differentiates by mixing, mixes by differentiating – marks differences through reciprocating mixes and overlaps” (Morris, 2004: 5). This formulation puts bodies and world in a continuous living tension. We are with the world only because we find ourselves also as part of the world. The body is therefore able to traverse itself and access the world, which is external to it through “mixing” with it. In the moment of experience, body and world is mixed, but also “differentiated only in being mixed” (Morris, 2004: 5). Body and world become body-in-world and world-with-body – both are changed.

In this sense we perceive with our bodies, we are with our bodies as we see with our eyes.<sup>27</sup> But how are we to understand the object of perception? Morris (2004) borrows from Merleau-Ponty's thought the understanding that things teach us how we should look at them<sup>28</sup>. Our perception of the world and of ourselves is a mix of activity and passivity, where activity turns to passivity as a town that is East of me becomes West of me as I drive past it (Morris, 2008: 3). This is a crucial point in Merleau-Ponty's ongoing criticism of the two poles of empiricism and rationalism. Merleau-Ponty (1962) argues for the hybrid position when he states that

empiricism cannot see that we need to know what we are looking for, otherwise we would not be looking for it, and intellectualism [rationalism] fails to see that we need to be ignorant of what we are looking for, or equally again we should not be searching.

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<sup>27</sup> We of course do not see with our eyes only. The eye and brain are extensions of one another. Without the visual cortex and the nerve connecting it to the ball of the eye, no vision is possible. Merleau-Ponty (1968: 144) argued also that we see with our whole bodies in that movement is essential for vision. Morris (2004: 40-42) also expanded on this in *Sense of Space*.

Through perception, we are therefore constantly learning by being open to how the world shows itself, but at the same time we need to direct our attention in specific ways to be able to open ourselves up to learning. Morris (2008: 2) referred to Merleau-Ponty's conviction that perception is learning, and that accounting for perception as learning means rejecting the traditional dualism of activity and passivity. I find a parallel here in Heidegger's poetic image of the strife between earth and world, as discussed earlier.

Both our activity and our passivity in perception are, however, shaped by various forces and structures. Merleau-Ponty places strong emphasis on the role of the body schema in styling our perception, but also mentions the role played in this styling by our individual histories and cultures, or our embeddedness, to use Heidegger's term. Morris (2004) further points out that our histories and cultures also shape our bodies through habitual movements. We develop a "style" (Morris, 2004: 38-39) of movement that shapes

<sup>28</sup> One might then beg the question of how things achieve this? Is it through their own inherent individual qualities or through how they relate to other things? This is an important question that will come up repeatedly throughout this chapter. This question also relates to the distinction that Heidegger made between readiness-to-hand and present-at hand.

how we perceive. Morris's conclusion is that our bodies and body schemas are also social: We perceive with and through others (Morris, 2004: 43-44).

We perceive with others, through others' eyes. Through an analysis of Jean-Paul Sartre's conception of encountering other subjects, Morris (2004: 25) comes to the conclusion that we do not first encounter other people as objects in objective space and then recognise them as subjects. In recognising the other's look, two spaces collide: the space of the self and the space of the other. It is not a case of two subjects colliding in space. Such collisions disrupt our own sense of space and force us to take the other's look, or way of looking, into account. Morris takes this further and states that "One's sense of depth and space is not simply rooted in the crossing of one's body and the world, but in the crossing of one's existence and an other's existence" (Morris: 2004: 25). Other people make us aware of our responsibility for the way we see them and for the way they see us, thus we are responsible for each other's existence.

This (ethical) responsibility, according to Morris (2004: 43), extends towards things: "I see my way of looking reflected in the thing. But everyday things hide this reflection of my look; I see the coffee cup,

rather than seeing how I look at the coffee cup". The way that I look at and see the thing, shaped by the thing itself, my style of movement, etc. produces meaning. Morris reminds us that perception remains mere cause and effect if there is no meaning-making and this meaning-making is rooted in movement, which entails a crossing between body and world (2004: 55). The world and things in the world are therefore also both active and passive in this meaning making. In this lies a problematic wonderment, as Merleau-Ponty (1968: 131) asks,

What is this talisman of colour, this singular virtue of the visible that makes it, held at the end of the gaze, nonetheless much more than a correlative of my vision, such that it imposes my vision upon me as a continuation of its own sovereign existence? How does it happen that my look, enveloping them, does not hide them, and, finally, that, veiling them, it unveils them?

In stating that the object of perception "imposes my vision upon me as a continuation of its own sovereign existence" (from the quote above), there is a certain agency ascribed to the object; the thing. Bannon (2011), however, warns against an animistic understanding of such activity, or agency of non-living things, as is often found in

environmental philosophy<sup>29</sup> inspired by Merleau-Ponty's notion of flesh, which is widely regarded as his most influential contribution in this field (Bannon, 2011: 328). The concept of flesh decentres humanity in that perception is understood as reflexive and reversible. Merleau-Ponty provides an understanding of nature as not opposed to humanity, but rather incorporating it (Bannon, 2011: 328).

The understanding of flesh as a human perceptual phenomenon has, however, been criticised for its anthropomorphism. The standard interpretation of flesh in contemporary Merleau-Ponty scholarship is that nature and things receive their dynamism from the embodied human perceptual field (Bannon, 2011: 328). In this process the world thus is humanised, even if humanity is decentred.

Bannon (2011) argues for a different interpretation of *flesh*: not as a perceptual phenomenon, but as an ontological structure. His intension is to argue that "Merleau-Ponty's ontology is best understood in terms of Heidegger's attempt to think ontological difference, that is, the divergence between being as such and the

being of beings" (Bannon, 2011: 330). This would imply that flesh cannot be grounded in "human personal engagement with the world (i.e., lived, perceptual experience) but [rather] in a body's relational engagement with its milieu (i.e. a system of affects)" (Bannon, 2011: 330). Our bodies are of the same stuff, and function in the same structures as the sensible world, rather than the world being structured according to embodied experience (Bannon, 2011: 337).

For Bannon (2011), flesh is a relational structure shared equally between animate and non-animate things. The precise nature of these relations, and how each object or being affects or is open to be affected, creates difference and individuality, but with a shared structure that Merleau-Ponty calls *flesh*. When Merleau-Ponty, Morris, and Tim Ingold then speak of the activity and agency of things, it is not a discovery of a form of animism, where a human form of sensibility is projected onto non-animate things. Ontological continuity with nature is rather "established through shared relational structures" (Bannon, 2011: 337).

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<sup>29</sup> Bannon (2011) discussed the environmental philosophies of Abram, Toadvine, Barbaras, and Dastur in this context.

This issue of the active role that things play in shaping human experience has gained prominence in the past two decades, in what has, apparently independently, developed into two strands of postphenomenology, as discussed in the following sections.

## 2.5. Postphenomenologies

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As with phenomenology, one should actually speak of more than a single understanding of postphenomenology. There are a few areas where phenomenological thinking has been extended and developed into new approaches. In this section I outline two strands of postphenomenology of great import to contemporary understanding and thinking about technology and place respectively and together. Firstly, I discuss the approach of which Ihde is the main proponent, and which Ihde described as a “nonsubjectivistic and inter-relational phenomenology” (Ihde, 2009: 11), with the implication that it is non-foundational and also attempts to steer away from transcendentalism with roots in both pragmatism and phenomenology. Secondly, I will review the strand of postphenomenology that is mainly influenced by post-structuralism, i.e. phenomenology after post-structuralism with the key influences being Jacques Derrida, and later Jean-Luc Nancy. In both these

strands of postphenomenology there is an emphasis on understanding human existence as being-with – others of all kinds – human and non-human – which leads in both strands to the incorporation and further development of affect theory.

### 2.5.1 Human-technology-world relations

A good place to start this discussion is perhaps Ihde’s own summary of his approach:

Postphenomenology is a modified, hybrid phenomenology. On the one side, it recognizes the role of pragmatism in the overcoming of early modern epistemology and metaphysics. It sees in classical pragmatism a way to avoid the problems and misunderstandings of phenomenology as a subjectivist philosophy, sometimes taken as antiscientific, locked into idealism or solipsism. Pragmatism has never been thought of this way, and I regard this as a positive feature. On the other side, it sees in the history of phenomenology a development of a rigorous style of analysis through the use of variational theory, the deeper phenomenological understanding of embodiment and human active bodily perception, and a dynamic understanding of a lifeworld as a fruitful enrichment of pragmatism. And, finally, with the emergence of the philosophy of technology, it finds a way to probe and analyse the role of technologies in social,

personal, and cultural life that it undertakes by concrete—empirical—studies of technologies in the plural. This, then, is a minimal outline of what constitutes postphenomenology (Ihde, 2009: 23).

Variational theory, in Ihde's analysis, results in multistabilities rather than essences, as found in Husserl's work. While Ihde initially uses the classic example of the Necker cube to illustrate how active shifts in perception result in different visual phenomena (in Ihde's analysis he adds a two-dimensional variation to the traditional three dimensional variations), his approach is best shown with reference to his example of the simple technology of a bow-under-tension that develops along various trajectories (archery, music, and tools) (Ihde, 2012). Within archery, the simple technology of a bow that propels an arrow into the distance with force appears in almost all ancient cultures, but with important ways in which embodied and cultural practices shape not only the form of technological artefacts but also the way that they are used and the results achieved. Ihde compares the English longbow, the French crossbow, the Mongolian double curved bow used on horseback, and the Chinese artillery bow. In this

example, Ihde (2009: 19) considers three points on which the technology pivots<sup>30</sup> to produce variations, namely "the materiality of the technologies, the bodily techniques of use, and the cultural context of the practice". The role of embodiment is constantly highlighted, but with the focus on trained practice, "and the appearance of differently structured lifeworlds relative to historical cultures and environments" (Ihde, 2009: 19).

Another example of variational analysis by Ihde is his analysis of the camera obscura, which develops according to what he called isomorphic (which aspires to making realistic images) and non-isomorphic trajectories that modify elements of the camera to make different kinds of phenomena visible, such as the spectroscope. In the discussion of my own landscape photography practice, I explore further variations and multistabilities of photographic technologies in terms of similar pivot points to those mentioned above, but also some additional pivot points that are discovered in the process of reflecting on my own photographic practice.

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<sup>30</sup> According to Whyte (2015: 75), a phenomenological pivot is "that which allows the variation to make sense as a variation".

Ihde explains that the phenomenology of Husserl and Dewey's pragmatism have similar roots, but that the two proponents took different paths forward. Husserl focuses on the study of consciousness, even though he recognises the importance of the 'lifeworld' in understanding consciousness. In Pragmatism, John Dewey came to the conclusion sooner than Husserl – that consciousness is a mere abstraction if it is not embedded in a lifeworld – due to his initial approach to human being as an organism/environment interrelation rather than a subject/objects structure (Ihde, 2009: 10). From pragmatism Ihde also draws his emphasis on human being as future orientated.<sup>31</sup> Dewey views the living-being/environment model as essentially "experimental," and future directed in that possible (but unknown) outcomes are imaginatively projected (Ihde, 2009: 10).

In summary, postphenomenology "is the step away from generalizations about technology *überhaupt* [in totality] and a step into the examination of technologies in their particularities. It is the

step away from a high altitude or transcendental perspective and an appreciation of the multidimensionality of technologies as material cultures within a lifeworld" (Ihde, 2009: 22).

The majority of postphenomenological work to date fits within Ihde's description of postphenomenology as "a philosophical style of analysis which deals with science and technology studies" (Ihde, 2015: vii). Vivian Sobchack (1992), has, however, productively pioneered its application to the analysis of cinema and media studies, and Verbeek (2009) has also explored the way artists work with technology to expand human vision. A recent publication edited by Yoni Van den Eede, Stacey Irwin and Galit Wellner (2017) collects postphenomenological work on media and the complex technologies involved in media practices.

At this stage it is necessary to clarify the concept of technology, which, according to Ingold (2000), has a very wide range of interpretations. Ingold, for instance, makes a convincing argument that the word "technology" should be reserved for what he calls

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<sup>31</sup> The future-orientedness of human being is an insight also found throughout in Heidegger's thinking in the *in-order-to* and related structures of our

involvements). See Wheeler (2011: 23) for a fuller explanation of various structures of Heidegger's concept of *involvements*.

“modern machine-theoretical cosmology”, which implies a decentralisation of the creative subject and objectification of productive processes. Ingold (2000: 314) argues that the “concept of technology, at least in its contemporary Western usage, sets out to establish the epistemological conditions for society’s control over nature by maximising the distance between them”. The split of nature and culture, according to Ingold, is therefore a modern phenomenon (brought about by the concept of technology) that should not be read back into primitive productive processes, which Ingold prefers to name *techne* rather than technology.

For Ingold (2000), the development of machine-based technology (such as a camera that can be described as an image-making machine), which designates a worldview that correlates largely with modernity, had the result of pitting culture against nature and creating distance between modern (Western) human society and nature. In this context of modern, Western society, Ingold views technology as a progressively alienating force. If Ingold is correct, then where does photography, and especially landscape photography, stand in terms of how severely it alienates humanity from nature? Ingold, however, goes on to dispense with the concept

of technology as predicated on the dichotomy of nature and human society, proposing that it is more accurate to understand technology as part of a mutually constitutive relationality between humans and their environments in which there is “no absolute dichotomy between human and non-human components” (Ingold, 2000: 321). Once this dichotomy is dispensed with, a different, less dystopic view of technology is possible, as exemplified by Ihde’s philosophy of technology. With this interrelational understanding (Ihde, 2012: 67) of technology, Ihde, and Verbeek after him, takes the earliest and simplest examples of tool use as examples of technologies. In this sense, simple writing, drawing, or painting and the various “receptacles” for writing/drawing/painting (as discussed in Phase 2) are technologies in their own right.

Taking the insights of phenomenologists such as Husserl and Heidegger as points of influence and of departure, Ihde has made it his task to examine how human being is also a being-with technology, or as he put it, an analysis of human-technology-world relations. The realisation that our perception is simultaneously active and passive, brings about an understanding of our responsibility in how we are and how we perceive, which is an ethical responsibility.

This realisation is echoed by Ihde's concern with intersubjective human embodiment as "constituted, or elevated by ethical responsibility" (Cohen 2006: 145). For Ihde, "technology represents an extension of human embodiment" (Cohen, 2006: 145).

A core insight of Ihde's work is furthermore that technology is inherently socio-cultural, in the sense that it is specific to the socio-cultural contexts it operates in. Ihde suggests that all science is inextricably tied up with technology (Viljoen, 2009: 88), and that technoscience<sup>32</sup> – through which technological artefacts such as cameras are produced – "directly or indirectly implies bodily action, perception, and praxis" (Ihde, 2009: 46). As with embodied being, technological objects are part of the world, yet at the same time extensions of our senses through which we perceive the world, and through which the world becomes open to perception in different ways.

Ihde's premise is that technologies (plural) mediate our being-in-the-world interrelationally. Technologies are integrated into the

relational ontology espoused in phenomenology, as Verbeek (2009: 4) explains, "[w]hat the world 'is' and what subjects 'are,' arises from the interplay between humans and reality, as it is mediated by technology". As we use technological tools or artefacts, we are also used by them (Ihde, 2012: 67). Ihde (2009: 23) goes as far as to say that "technologies can be the means by which "consciousness itself" is mediated", resulting in technological intentionality (Ihde, 1990: 141, as cited in Verbeek, 2010: 114). There is thus a directedness towards a specific way of use that technological artefacts prompt and evoke, rather than to determine ways in which they should be engaged with (Verbeek, 2010: 115). This active mediating function of technological artefacts is, however, not a property of the artefact itself but can only be understood in terms of relations human beings have to them, embedded in specific contexts (Verbeek 2010: 116). The co-constitutive relationality between subject and object can never, however, be absolute (Verbeek, 2010: 112). As Verbeek reiterated, "the fact that humans are what they are on the basis of

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<sup>32</sup> Ihde's (2009: 5) term attests to his conviction that scientific knowledge and the instruments used to attain such knowledge cannot be disentangled and that both science and technology are to a great extent socially produced.

their relation to the world does not imply that they are entirely determined by it" (Verbeek, 2010: 112). Postphenomenology therefore holds a non-determinist conception of technology. According to Ciano Aydin and Verbeek (2015), a determinist approach to technology understands technology as an "autonomous force" that humanity has lost control over. Once a technology is developed, as classical philosophers of technology argue (Verbeek, 2010: 9-11), an inevitable trajectory of development and unintended social and technological consequences is set in motion "that cannot be controlled or regulated (anymore) by human beings" (Aydin & Verbeek, 2015: 8).

In his 1990 book, *Technology and the Lifeworld*, Ihde develops a framework for the analysis of human-technology-world relations. The schematic summary (see Table 1) of this framework as adapted by Verbeek (2010: 123-128) is given below. In this framework, Ihde identifies three kinds of human-technology-world relations, namely relations of mediation, alterity relations, and background relations (Verbeek, 2010: 123).

**Table 1: Ihde's (1990) framework of human-technology-world relations**

Relations of mediation: I-technology-world	
Hermeneutic relations: I → (technology—world)	Embodied relations: (I—technology) → world
Alterity relation: I → technology (- world)	
Background relation: I (—technology—world)	

In his examination of relations of mediation, Ihde starts with Heidegger's analysis of our relation to equipment as "readiness-to-hand" (see Section 0) coupled with Merleau-Ponty's analysis of the role of embodiment in perception (see Section 2.4) (Verbeek, 2010: 124). There are three characteristics of readiness-to-hand that fits Ihde's purpose: a) that it withdraws itself from our direct attention as object, but is present as something to use, b) that it forms part of the network of involvements that make up equipmental space, and c) that the tool becomes a "means rather than the object of our experience" (Verbeek, 2010: 124). This last point refers to the practical task engaged in rather than the experience or perception of an object or the world.

To understand how technological artefacts mediate experience, Ihde turns to Merleau-Ponty's examples of how objects can become extensions of our own embodiment, such as the cane that extends the blind man's range of touch and ceases "to be an object for him, and is no longer perceived for itself" (Merleau-Ponty, 1962: 165). From such examples Ihde draws the insight that human beings can extend and modify their spatiality and sensory abilities with artefacts. Perception is therefore mediated through artefacts, which is not to say that perception without artefacts is unmediated, as if we have direct, pure access to reality. All perception is mediated in some sense, and then additionally mediated through artefacts.

The basic set of relations in Ihde's schema, although formalised separately, form a continuum rather than separate classes. With the hermeneutic relations, Ihde suggests that the meaning we make of the world – how we perceive as well as the understanding we gain from this perception – is influenced by technological artefacts to various degrees. In embodied relations, we incorporate artefacts into our body schemas. The artefacts themselves are not the object of interest, but that with which we perceive or carry out a task. The artefact 'withdraws' and becomes quasi-transparent. The criterion for

this kind of relation is that the artefact must effectively facilitate the desired perception or function. An example of such a relation used by both Ihde and Verbeek in his discussion of Ihde's work, is wearing spectacles and examining the world through other optical devices such as binoculars and microscopes, of which the spectacles is the most radically embodied because it 'withdraws' more radically.

With *hermeneutic relations*, the artefact is used in the process of interpreting the world. In this case the object of interest is the artefact, but only in order to understand or gain information about the world, such as measuring temperature with a thermometer. Ihde insists that such artefacts have to be "read", or in other words, one must learn how to interpret what such an artefact reveals and how it relates to the world.

In *alterity relations*, one engages with the artefact as a quasi-other. Examples of this relation would be drawing money from an automatic teller or playing with an interactive automated toy. In this case the world recedes to the background and the artefact itself is the object of interest, although it could still be engaged with in order to achieve some purpose external to the artefact, such as obtaining information from a computer console at an airport.

*Background relations* in turn refers to relations to technologies that are not consciously engaged with but facilitate our comfort or productivity, such as electricity or air-conditioning. With this kind of relation, we become so accustomed to the artefacts that they are normally only noticed when they fail or malfunction.

While Ihde and Verbeek both emphasise that these relations form a continuum, I would add that such relations often occur in combinations, especially in more complex technologies<sup>33</sup> such as new generation customisable digital cameras that offer highly sophisticated light metering systems as well as network connectivity and note-taking and filing functionalities.

Ihde's framework contributes to the critique of an instrumentalist understanding of technology in that it positions technologies as neither neutral nor determinist. Through this framework, technologies are understood as not necessarily negatively impacting

our 'authentic 'dwelling in the world' but as always involving some form of amplification *and* reduction. As one aspect of the world is amplified (enhanced), other aspects recede into the background, or are reduced. As Verbeek (2010) states, technologies are therefore more ambivalent than alienating with respect to the interpretations of the world with which they are linked. When they mediate our experience, they have as much a reductive as a strengthening impact on our experience. Verbeek, however, also states that "the more it is possible to embody a technology, the less it predetermines in which ways the world can manifest itself through it". I would want to question this statement, or at least point out some complications due to the unavoidable link between habituation and becoming embodied.<sup>34</sup> The more accustomed one becomes to an artefact and the way that it mediates one's experience, the more 'transparent' and embodied it becomes. A word that comes to mind is

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<sup>33</sup> Recently several postphenomenological analyses of complex technologies have been published (see Wellner, 2016; Spicer, 2017).

<sup>34</sup> Trigg (2012: 9-13) explored habituation to place in terms of body memory; memories that are embodied such that they become part of our identities as physical selves. Casey (2001: 409-413) also explored the role of habituation (a Bordieuan concept) in and to place in structuring our being. Their descriptions

could easily be applied to things and artefacts that also form part of the structures of places. Although Ihde (2009: 44) and Verbeek (2010: 126) respectively mentioned the importance of skill acquisition in technological artefacts becoming embodied, it does not form a pertinent aspect of their analyses and is also not linked to habituation.

“naturalised”, which is often used to explain how an idea becomes part of the dominant ideology. It is possibly the technologies we are least aware of that have the greatest determining force. Precisely because we do not notice them, we do not make choices about them. One such an example would be the complex hardware, software, and networking technologies integrated into smart phones that allow the phones (or rather the corporations behind the phone) to constantly prompt the user to engage with it, thereby forming an emotional bond between user and device. Even such determining characteristics of technologies are, however, never absolute and also not necessarily reductive.

While Verbeek leans heavily on the grounding work of Ihde, he was not uncritical thereof. One point of criticism, specifically of Ihde’s human-technology-world relations framework, is that in this framework, there is a distinct subject and object, with technology in-between. According to Verbeek, this harks back to dualist thinking, and does not explicitly take account of the co-constitutive relation between technology and human beings, or between technology and the world. In fact, it is almost impossible to separate technology and world/ technology and self – as difficult as separating nature and

culture. Technology has shaped so many aspects of contemporary cultures, from how we conceive to how we die, that we cannot think of humanity separate from technologies (Mackay, 1995: 246).

Verbeek (2010) emphasises the simultaneous co-constitution, not only of subject and object but also of technology, in the interrelations between human, technology, and world. The implications of this is that the nature of things should be sought in the kinds of relations shaped in the interrelation of human and non-human actors or “actants” (a term that differentiates neither between human and non-human, nor between nature and culture [Latour, 1996: 376]). It is thus through relations that human experience as well as the material nature of the technologies, and of the environment, are shaped. As Verbeek argues, postphenomenology does not bridge the “Grand Canyon” between subject and object by blurring the distinction between them – as actor-network-theory (ANT) does, claiming that they are to be treated as semiotically equivalent entities – but by showing that they are intertwined, even at the level of their constitution” (Verbeek, 2005: 138).

The impact of technologies in such relations can therefore not be predetermined. Ihde understands technology not as a single,

generalisable phenomenon but as a series of multistable variations. A postphenomenological conception of technology is therefore non-neutral without reverting to either determinism or naïve neutrality (Carusi & Hoel, 2015: 74).

A further aspect of Ihde's schema involves what he calls the micro- and macro-perceptual levels on which technologies have hermeneutical implications. The micro-perceptual is on the level of "bodily sensory perception" (Verbeek, 2010: 122), while the macro-perceptual "consists of the frameworks (such as cultural or scientific frameworks) within which sensory perception becomes meaningful" (Verbeek, 2010: 122). These two levels are once again intertwined; the one constantly influencing the other. In Ihde's analyses of the hermeneutic implications of technologies, he focuses more on the macro-perceptual levels. Verbeek argues that, due to their intertwinement, both levels should be given equal consideration, thus fully acknowledging the influence of mediation on how we understand the world.

While classical phenomenological thought <sup>35</sup>sees our unmediated (by technological artefacts) perceptions as a "primary", more authentic structure and mediated perception as a "secondary", reduced or impoverished structure, postphenomenology understands human reality to be much more nuanced, and always exhibiting some form of amplification and some form of reduction simultaneously (Verbeek, 2010: 134). Instead of referring to first and second structures of perception, Verbeek refers to "transformations of high contrast and transformations of low contrast" (2010: 130) of perception, where, for example, spectacles worn by someone with slight myopia would transform her perception such to match her vision very closely to how she saw before she needed spectacles (low contrast transformation). Conversely, the vision of a person born with severe myopia would be transformed with a high contrast, and enhance the lifestyle of the person dramatically, or at a "high contrast" level (Verbeek, 2010: 130.)

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<sup>35</sup> See Verbeek's (2010: 132-134) discussion of the work of Dutch psychiatrist and philosopher, J.H. Van den Berg.

Such variations in contrast due to varied applications, amongst other factors, result in what Ihde calls “Instrumental phenomenological variations” (Ihde, 2009: 79). There is therefore no fixed, predetermined hermeneutic outcome for any given engagement with or use of any given technology. Within such variations, Ihde (2009: 44) finds relatively fixed but varied patterns of practice that he calls multistabilities, which allows for the discovery of new uses of artefacts, and therefore new ways of interpreting the world. Verbeek (2010: 135) reiterated that “technologies also make possible new modes of access to reality what would be impossible without mediation.” Technologies thus constitute a new reality – a new “objectivity”.

In terms of photographic technology, then what we look at; what we see when we look, how we look, and how we interpret and react to what we see and understand are shaped by cameras – in their various incarnations and applications, just as we also shape how and for what purposes cameras are used. Vilem Flusser (1983: 10) argues that

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<sup>36</sup> In an earlier text, Verbeek (2009: 2) related this insight to art-making when he stated that “during the past centuries, artists have been investigating this

photography creates a different reality, rather than creating true representations of the world. While he describes this relation between human kind and photography as a mediation – “Human beings 'ex-ist', i.e. the world is not immediately accessible to them and therefore images are needed” (Flusser, 1983: 10) – he goes on to provocatively state that we forget that images were initially supposed to mediate between us and our world and instead we relate to technical images (of which photography is but one example) as reality itself. Ihde’s framework of human-technology-world relations reminds us that all human-technology-world relations are mediatory in that they shape how we perceive, understand, and interpret our world, but that these mediations should not be treated as reality itself. According to a postphenomenological understanding, photographic technology can therefore potentially be used to learn about the world and discover new ways to look and see.<sup>36</sup>

phenomenon of technological mediation and explored the ways in which it constitutes the ‘objectivity’ of reality and the ‘subjectivity’ of the perceiver”.

Ihde characterises the mediating role of artefacts in terms of what he calls technological intentionality (Ihde, 1990: 141). By this he means that technologies – like consciousness for Husserl – have a certain directionality, an inclination, or trajectory that shapes the ways in which they are used. Focusing on the directedness of technologies, Ihde also uses “technological intentionality” to refer to that aspect of reality that the artefact is directed towards, such as a specific sound frequency, or a specific range on the electromagnetic radiation spectrum (Verbeek, 2010: 114). Camera sensors/photographic films, for instance, are sensitive to a specific spectrum, which includes, but is not necessarily limited to, what is visible to human vision.

Verbeek relates Ihde’s formulation of technological intentionalities to Latour’s notion of technological scripts, which goes much further than intentionality or directedness in manipulating human behaviour. An example of such a technological script given by Verbeek is the door-spring with built-in resistance, which can be formulated in a series of expressions such as “close the door behind you; don’t bang the door”. According to Verbeek (2010), the script of an artefact is “the program of actions or behaviour that an artefact invites”. In this

description it is important to point out the word “invites” as opposed to “compels” or “forces”. The script can be circumvented in various ways, or the object can simply be ignored. The word “program” brings Flusser’s (1983: 69-70) notion of the “photographic program” to mind, which correlates with Latour’s symmetrical treatment of humans and non-humans; artefacts are taken to be equal role players, with a certain agency, yet not independent of human actions. Humans and non-humans are understood to be inextricably intertwined and tied together in networks of relations that could be referred to as affective fields.

“But, phenomenologically” writes Ihde, the intertwining of humans and technologies “is not to be thought of as negative; quite to the contrary, the transformations themselves are precisely what makes for new phenomena, which in the case of scientific practice also produce or stimulate new knowledge” (Ihde, 2012: 46).

### 2.5.2 Postphenomenology 2<sup>37</sup>

The second form of postphenomenology ties the preceding discussions centred around human-technology-world relations specifically to concepts of place, as it is a development associated with the field of human geography. There are definite overlaps between the generative ideas of this form and Ihde's postphenomenology. Postphenomenological geographies are characterised by the influence of poststructuralist thought, while Ihde's postphenomenology draws on pragmatism (Ash & Simpson, 2014: 52). While both forms of postphenomenology endeavour to move away from a subject-centred approach to experience, geographical postphenomenology has endeavoured to develop beyond the relational view of intentionality still retained to some extent by Ihde, to an understanding of the simultaneity of subject and object. The one does not first exist and then constitute the other. Rather they both come into existence together, and with each other. This co-constitutionality of subject and object is an important

refinement of Ihde's ideas made in more recent postphenomenological work such as that of Aydin and Verbeek (2015).

Louisa Cadman (2009: 7) observes that there is an "imperative for non-representational geographies to always instil an affirmative will to connect, relate, and become". It is in response to such criticisms that some contemporary thinkers such as Rose and Wylie respectively, as well as Malpas, have started voicing suspicions of such unified understandings of human Being. These writers tend to then reinterpret the original texts of Husserl, Heidegger, and Merleau-Ponty, for instance, to highlight and develop the less fixed and stable aspects of their thought, such as Heidegger's notion of the *Unheimlich*, re-examined by Trigg (2012) and Alphonso Lingis' emphasis on the invisible in his introduction to his translation of Merleau-Ponty's *The Visible and the Invisible* (Merleau-Ponty, 2004).

Wylie and Rose respectively write about landscape and place in this way, where landscape refers to the perceived scene one faces in the

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<sup>37</sup> Many of the ideas that characterise this form of postphenomenology are in some cases (see Cadman, 2009) referred to as non-representational theories, especially within the context of geography.

environment. Wylie draws extensively on Derrida when he expands on absence, rather than presence, as a structuring element in landscape experience. Wylie uses Derrida's critique of notions of presence to offer "a sort of ghosting and dislocating that disrupts Merleau-Ponty's presence, and that thus entwines landscape with absence" (Wylie, 2009: 280). In this text, Wylie (2009: 282) concludes that "looking-with landscape will always also, or so it seems (see Merleau-Ponty, 1968; De Certeau, 1983; Nancy, 2005), convoke a certain distancing in which a 'subject' and a 'world' are separately articulated".

Mitch Rose focuses on Heidegger's concept of dwelling and reframes it as a perpetual and never complete effort to merely mark and claim a place in this world. "Building", Rose (2012: 769) writes, "is how we, as mortals in the midst of change, transformation, and death, endeavour to hold onto a world by claiming it as our own; it is how we work to build a place for ourselves even as such sites elude our mortal hands".

In a sense, the decentralisation of the human in the understanding of the world, as mentioned above, has paved the way for the incorporation of non-human artefacts (including technology) as

active agents in experience. Human life is no longer considered as the dominant, directing agency. According to James Ash and Paul Simpson (2014: 54), "We would argue that the appearance of human life and agency is only ever an outcome gifted to us through a relationship with non-human objects".

## 2.6. Affect theory

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Robert Spicer (2017: 83) connects Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's conception of "assemblages" with postphenomenological analysis, and explains that "an assemblage can also be described as the temporary connecting of technology, persons, feelings, and the atmosphere around them". The value of an exploration of relations between inanimate objects for this present study lies in the possibilities it offers for understanding the dynamics of technology-world interactions that make up part of human-technology-world assemblages. Each of the three places and indeed, each scene, that I work with for the present study, therefore forms unique assemblages of myself as photographer, the particular photographic system used, and the specific place.

In an effort to correct the Kantian and neo-Kantian over-valuation of reason in the way people form opinions and judgements, early affect

theorists conceptualised affects as “independent of and in an important sense prior to, ideology – that is, prior to intentions, meanings, reasons, and beliefs” (Leys, 2011: 437). Affects are seen as being non-signifying, automatic processes separate from conscious awareness and meaning, but able to significantly influence opinions and judgements, including aesthetic judgements (Leys 2011: 437). This conception of affective processes as separate from cognitive processes allowed Sylvan Tomkins (1962: 248, cited in Leys, 2011: 437) to identify a dichotomy between the “‘real’ causes of affect and the individual’s own interpretation of these causes”.

Ruth Leys (2011) critiques early affect theorist Tomkins and his followers<sup>38</sup> for re-instating a separation between mind and body, even though the role of the body in cognitive processes is now given more prominence. Leys argues (convincingly) that the idea that our minds lag behind physical affective processes in shaping actions is based on questionable science. Newer research seems to confirm

that although some affective processes such as fear influence actions pre-cognitively, it is true only in the minority of cases. Newer studies have found that the affective processes are not simply linear as the external “stimulus–body response–feeling” model for how emotions come about suggests (Wetherell, 2012: 35). In questioning this linearity, Margaret Wetherell places doubt on the absolute distinction between emotion and affect. In this distinction, affect is associated with the non-narrative and a-signifying; the impersonal and objective. Conversely, emotion is associated with the narrative and semiotic; personal and subjective (Anderson, 2009: 80). If affect and emotion are not absolutely distinct, it means that affect is potentially signifying even though it remains objective and impersonal.

While the study of affect is often associated with the study of emotional responses, its reach extends beyond emotions to cognition and sense-making. Affect is as much about sense as it is

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<sup>38</sup> Seigworth and Gregg (2010: 5) trace two divergent, although mutually influential, streams in affect theory, the one based on “Silvan Tomkins’s psychobiology of differential affects (1962)” as exemplified in the work of Sedgwick and Frank and the other stream based on “Gilles Deleuze’s Spinozist ethology of bodily capacities (1988a) which is hugely influential in the work of

Massumi”. Leys’ classification of Massumi as a follower of Tomkins’s approach to affect as pre-conscious thus does not preclude his adoption of Deleuzian concepts.

about sensibility (Wetherell, 2012: 13). As such, sense-making is characterised by constant feedback loops between environmental, internal (bodily), cognitive, and emotional stimuli (Wetherell & Beer, 2014). In support of this approach, Gregory Seigworth and Melissa Gregg (2010: 2-3) stress that “affect and cognition are never fully separable – if for no other reason than that thought is itself a body, embodied”.

In keeping with Wetherell’s understanding, Sebastjan Vörös, Tom Froese and Alexander Riegler (2016: 199) state that recent developments in affect theory posit a fluid understanding of sense-making with varying degrees of symmetry, depending on the state of consciousness of the person involved.

These newer developments formulate sense-making as an

intertwinement of perception and imagination whose relative contributions can shift depending on our state of consciousness: perception is a case of sense-making in which the world plays a significant constitutive role [...], while dreaming is a case of sense-making where the contribution of the outer is minimal compared to the contribution of the inner (Vörös et al. 2016: 199) (see

Figure 1).

Figure 1).

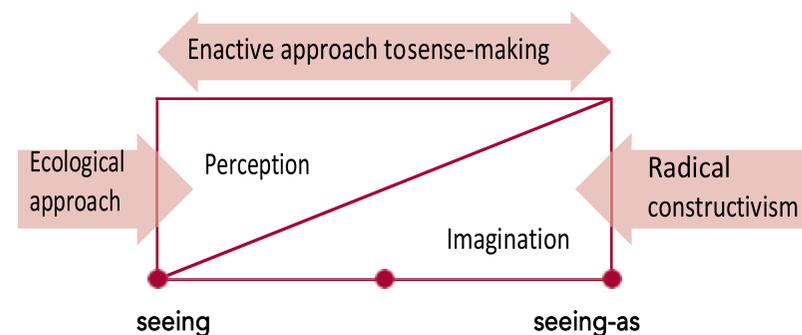


Figure 1: Enactive approach to sense-making based on Varela et al. (1991, cited by Vörös et al., 2016: 199)

As Vörös et al. explain, the enactive approach to sense-making spans a spectrum “bordered at the inner extreme by radical constructivism – meaning is projected by the agent – and at the outer extreme by the ecological approach – meaning is pre-given in the world” (2016: 199.). The linearity of the Vörös et al. model shown in Figure 1, however, belies the intertwining of perception and imagination that Vörös et al. describe in the same article. From earlier discussions (in Section 2.4 of this chapter) on the active-passive nature of

perception, it emerges that there is always an element of both 'seeing' and 'seeing-as' in perception.

Moreover, it is not always possible to distinguish clearly between perception and imagination as the solid diagonal would suggest. Even so, this model does present a plausible mid-way between realism and idealism that acknowledges the complexity of how humans make sense of the world, and also allows for a variety of approaches.

Varela *et al.*'s enactive approach to sense-making is formulated specifically within the field of neuro-phenomenology, which is concerned with understanding the human mind and cognition. The enactive approach to sense-making, although it forms part of affect theory, does therefore not consider affects of non-human interaction or how technological artefacts figure in this sense-making process.

In an effort to overcome anthropocentrism (among other motivations), a growing body of literature formulates affect as

independent of human consciousness. Deleuze and Guattari are often cited as important contributors to this discussion with their suggestion that "affects are becomings" (1987a: 256): "an entire, vital, and modulating field of myriad becomings across human and nonhuman" (Seigworth & Greg, 2010: 6). Affect theory thus ventures to explore "ways in which technical objects relate to one another and to human beings outside of human consciousness or intentionality" (Anderson, 2009: 78).

Along these lines, Ian Bogost develops an "alien phenomenology" in which he speculates about affective relations between inanimate objects (Ash, 2013: 20), that go beyond what objective scientific evidence can provide. In using words such as "experience" in relation to things, Bogost draws attention to the limits of scientific objectivity (Bogost, 2012: 15, 68).<sup>39</sup>

The value of an exploration of relations between inanimate objects for this study lies in the possibilities it offers for understanding the

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<sup>39</sup> In his thinking about the limits of scientific objectivity, Bogost drew extensively from Graham Harman's Object Orientated Ontology (OOO). A full discussion of OOO falls beyond the scope of this study, but it is worthwhile noting that Harman has started to influence postphenomenologists such as Yoni van den Eeden and

Peter-Paul Verbeek (see the 2017 publication, *Postphenomenology and Media: Essays on Human–Media–World Relations*, edited by Yoni Van Den Eede, Stacey O'Neal Irwin, Galit Wellner).

dynamics of technology-world interactions that make up part of human-technology-world assemblages. As Ash (2013: 21) puts it, thinking about affective relations between inanimate objects promotes “thinking about materiality as something that is not reducible to static matter or interacting through brute causality, but as dynamic and selective in how aspects of an object engage with aspects of other objects”.

Thinking about affective relations between inorganic entities is, however, to project a human understanding of communication and interaction onto objects. To avoid this, Ash (2013) adopts the term “perturbation” from Levi Bryant (2011) to refer to the way inorganic objects relate to each other. According to Ash, things are selectively perturbed by each other, depending on their inherent qualities – their relations depend on individual qualities. These qualities are, however, only discovered in the relation. With each new relation, new qualities could theoretically be discovered. It thus follows that, even though objects appear to us and to other objects in terms of their relations, objects cannot be reduced to their relations (Ash, 2013: 23). In relations we find caricatures; abstractions of qualities (Bogost, 2012: 66).

Bogost and Ash both cite Harman as a critical influence. In Harman’s *The Quadruple Object* (2011), Harman reinterprets Heidegger’s tool analysis (in relation to other aspects of Heidegger’s thought), not as pragmatist, nor as a relational ontology, but as pointing towards the realisation that both ready-to-handness and present-at-handness are abstractions of the object. In short, Harman (2011: 44) writes:

[B]oth theoretical abstraction and the use of tools are equally guilty of distorting the tools themselves. Insofar as a tool is “used,” it is no less present-at-hand than an image in consciousness. But a tool is not “used”; it is. And insofar as it is, the tool is not exhausted by its relations with human theory or human praxis.

The conclusion is in line with Heidegger – that the object withdraws, but “the withdrawal of objects is not some cognitive trauma that afflicts only humans and a few smart animals but expresses the permanent inadequacy of any relation at all” (Harman, 2011: 44). According to Ash (2013: 21), it is precisely the acknowledgement of this withdrawal of the real object that distinguishes the concept of “perturbation” from apparently similar terms such as affect (as Deleuze and Guattari formulated it) and James Gibson’s (1986: 127) theory of affordances. Things are selectively open to be perturbed

and have limited capacity to perturb other things by virtue of their pre-existing qualities that cannot be exhausted by relations.

While affect, explained as “a prepersonal intensity corresponding to the passage from one experiential state of the body to another and implying an augmentation or diminution in that body's capacity to act ... (with body taken in its broadest possible sense to include “mental” or ideal bodies)” by the translator of Deleuze and Guattari’s *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987b: xvi), implies a perceptible change due to a certain force that elicits a response, “perturbation” is not necessarily perceptible in this sense. Ash (2013) gives the example of a rock lying on sand in an apparent condition of stasis, which would be mute, in terms of affect and affordances. Yet, as Ash (2013: 23) explains, “rock and sand is always selectively generating a space and time particular to that perturbation”. Ash bases this assessment on a conception of time as emanating “from the play of qualities between objects as they perturb one another, rather than a flowing movement of some transcendental force” (Ash 2013: 24). He further explains, with reference to Harman (Ash, 2005: 250), that if time is the outcome of objects selectively perturbing one another, then space is the non-relation between objects’ interior cores, which

are never fully deployed or accessible in any encounter. It is such specific space-times generated through the mutual perturbation of objects that Ash calls “atmospheres”.

In the context of affect theory, atmosphere is a point of particular interest in terms of collective affect (Anderson, 2009: 78). Atmosphere is of interest here because it can never be a property of any given entity, but occurs between entities, and as such, “traverses distinctions between peoples, things, and spaces” (Anderson, 2009: 78). Although it can occur, as Ash argues, independent of human consciousness, atmospheres are important because they affect both things and people – individually and collectively.

The concepts of perturbation and the generation of atmospheres in the interaction and relation of objects open up a way of thinking about technology-world relations independent of human involvement, which, according to Harman, is what is missing from Heidegger’s account of Being. Whereas human geographers have in the past decade started working extensively on affective atmospheres in their conceptions of place, thinking about objects in terms of the atmospheres they generate incorporates technological

objects into the understanding of place, which seems essential in the technologically mediated contemporary context.

## 2.7. (Post)phenomenology and practice-based research (PbR)

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According to Drew Hyland (2016: 31), one of the aspects of Heidegger's philosophy that remains relevant and influential in contemporary thinking, despite his dubious politics and personal life, is his emphasis on continual questioning and a "deepening of the questionworthiness" of the issue at hand without ever providing answers". Hyland (2016: 32) maintains that Heidegger offers responses instead of answers, because "answers seek a kind of closure on a given issue whereas responses seek rather to open up that issue to deepen our sensitivity to its nuances of meaning".

In this sense, epistemology is closely aligned to phenomenology. In this present study, the responses to the question formulated for this thesis cannot all be fully articulated in writing and will have to be shown visually. To some extent the process of responding to the questions is a phenomenology of the experience of photographing

landscape – a phenomenology of practice. In what follows in Section 3 of Phase 1, the practice becomes part of the process of enquiry, as well as the articulation of the results in writing.

Van Manen (2014: 410) states that in phenomenological research the "the research is the writing" and further that "it is critical to insist on the inseparableness of phenomenological inquiry or research from phenomenological writing or textual reflection. And, of course, phenomenological reflection may involve the visual and auditory languages of images, art, cinema, or music" (Van Manen, 2014: 409). It is through the writing process that the thinking happens and is articulated. As stated above, however, I propose that the questions engaged with here require that the *photographing* also be the research, as the thinking happens in the process of creating the visuals. This approach relates to Johnson's further refinement of Frayling's (1994:5) category of "research through art" in which he explored and defended a process-orientated conception of knowledge (Johnson, 2010: 145).

According to Johnson (2010:145), the process of knowing is visceral and perceptual and has the aim of transforming experience, which in turn, has the potential to transform art. PbR offers a shift away from

purely textual representation, towards other forms of presentation that make use of the other senses, potentially presenting other forms of knowledge that take our kinaesthetic, embodied being into account (Halford & Knowles, 2005).

Similarly, in this project, the visceral and cognitive processes involved in photographing become a way of thinking and a process of knowing that are transformed as they develop. As writing is a form of articulation of thinking, so the photographic images are an articulation of this process of knowing involved in photographing. Within the context of artistic research, of which PbR is a category, the researcher therefore has a dual role in which experience, reflection, and theorising are intimately related. As Tara Brabazon and Zeynep Dagli (2010: 38) state, "Practice keeps the questions open, invites experience and interaction. Practice is the starting point, enabling theoretical and intellectual reflection within an academic framework, adopting a dual role, that of a practitioner and a theorist". In this study I, as practitioner and theorist, engage in the physical environment of places, with and through photographic technologies.

Van Manen (2014: 299), however, argues that while visuals, poetry, and other such forms of expression/communication (Van Manen called these "the vocative") are unmissable in phenomenological research, it (the vocative) is insufficiently articulate to be phenomenological reflection in its own right.

In a phenomenological study, according to Van Manen (2014: 226), the aim is to bracket out what we think we know about a phenomenon and try to experience it for itself. Van Manen (2014: 25) emphasises the interpretive nature of writing about experience in this way, labelling it hermeneutic writing, as he explains in the following passage:

Hermeneutic phenomenology is a method of abstemious reflection on the basic structures of the lived experience of human existence. The term method refers to the way or attitude of approaching a phenomenon. Abstemious means that reflecting on experience aims to abstain from theoretical, polemical, suppositional, and emotional intoxications. Hermeneutic means that reflecting on experience must aim for discursive language and sensitive interpretive devices that make phenomenological analysis, explication, and description possible and intelligible. Lived experience means that phenomenology reflects on

the prereflective or prepredicative life of human existence as living through it.

Theory is therefore put aside in the attempt to get “to the things themselves”, in full realisation that this reduction is never fully achievable, even though several methods are employed to guard against the effects of theory and other interferences (Van Manen 2014: 65). Yet, according to Van Manen, theory plays an important role as foil to show up what phenomenological reflection contributes over what theory lacks (Van Manen 2014: 67). In this same trajectory, in what follows in this phase of the study, I use photographic practice, coupled with reflective and reflexive writing, to show gaps in theoretical understandings of the photographic practice as experience.

To illustrate the multifaceted structure of human bodily involvement in their environment, Morris (2004: 71-72) uses the metaphor of folding origami figures. He explains that the paper one folds with records the process of folding, but still remains only paper. Furthermore, the various facets that emerge due to the folds are all still part of the same piece of paper. Looking through a camera, for instance, we perceive the infolding of reflected light through a particular lens, and then through the lenses and retinas of our eyes,

which are an extension of our brains and nervous system. This infolding of light and lens can be recorded as a photograph, but it is only one aspect of the photographic representation of place. The infolding of walking with a camera and tripod, the images in the photographer’s imagination, the physical topography and location of the environment, the photographer’s physical body, memories, and second-hand knowledge are all limits, or folds, that structure a multifaceted, embodied experience of place. To take the origami metaphor a little further, the resultant structure is pliable: new folds can be made and old ones unfolded, although traces of old folds might always be discernible, but this is perhaps where the metaphor starts to fail. The photographs, in this phase of the study, are therefore not primarily the phenomena under consideration, or the data, they are part of the tools of reflection.

If I follow Van Manen, however, the visual is used as vocative expression only. Van Manen (2014: 17) refers to the “vocative” in terms writing specifically, but acknowledges that other media have begun to displace writing. For Van Manen, the vocative is “expressivity of writing [that] involve[s] not only our head and hand,

but our whole sensual and sentient embodied being" (Van Manen 2014: 18-19).

Following Heidegger's later thought, Van Manen (2014: 18-19) expresses the value of the vocative in phenomenological research as unmissable. Logical prepositional language cannot adequately articulate the complexities of human experience. Heidegger strongly promotes and implements the poetic use of language in phenomenological description and interpretation. As Heidegger (2001: 72) claims and then demonstrates with his own writing in his later work, poetry can express a more accurate understanding of life-world phenomena, because it "grows out of being", in other words, it expresses the way we are in the world, and our experience thereof. Furthermore, Heidegger (2001: 72) sees art as having the same expressive potential as poetry, in that art is the "setting-into-work of truth", which is poetry in that it stems from the Greek term 'poiesis'

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<sup>40</sup> This is a view that Heidegger shares (except that Heidegger believes that the poetic is a purer thinking than philosophy). In his introduction to *Language, Poetry, Thinking*, Albert Hofstadter writes of Heidegger's later texts that "[i]n truth, this is not philosophy; it is not abstract theorizing about the problems of

which means making or 'bringing forth' (Robert Sinnerbrink, 2011: 155).

Van Manen (2014: 299), however, contends that the poetic, as vocative expression, does not sufficiently articulate phenomenological insights. It is not philosophy<sup>40</sup>. Van Manen (2014: 299) maintains that the vocative must be combined with other types of writing, such as descriptive, hermeneutic, or reflexive writing. Visuals and other media, according to Van Manen (2014: 299), as with poetry, can and should be used as vocative expression, but still falls short of the written word.

In discussing the role of theory in phenomenological research, Van Manen (2014: 67) contrasts it with the vocative, explaining that theory often presents generalised abstractions of reality that fail to acknowledge the embeddedness and individuality of lived experiences. Phenomenologists themselves, however, produce theories that inform subsequent phenomenological thinking. Ihde

knowledge, value; or reality; it is the most concrete thinking and speaking about Being" (in Heidegger, 2001: xi).

(2009: 22), for instance, with his postphenomenology, argues that the phenomenological aim of arriving at some essential understanding of phenomena is misguided. Even Heidegger, who makes a case for the essence of things being tied inseparably to the context they are embedded in, would approach a concept such as technology in an abstracted way, interpreted and formed in his own situatedness in German culture (Malpas, 2006: 21-22). As these examples show, it is important to take into account that all theory has some root in lived experience (Van Manen, 2014: 66).

Through his own application of phenomenological reflection, as discussed earlier, Ihde thus arrives at his theories of multistabilities (see discussion on pages 48-22) but at the same time Ihde uses Heidegger's theory of equipmentality and Merleau-Ponty's theories of embodiment to develop his framework for human-technology-world relations. Van Manen (2014: 66) explains that phenomenological theory serves to develop phenomenological method – even though we are encouraged to develop our own methods – relevant to each context.

Phenomenology does not aim to provide theories that we can use to explain things or help us to control the world. Rather the aim is to

develop understanding. More importantly, perhaps, the aim is to “bring us in more direct contact with the world” (Van Manen 2014: 68). In keeping with this aim, in Section 3 I develop a nuanced understanding of landscape photography practice by involving the reader/viewer in the interrelations of the photographer, the photographic technologies, and the three places I work with.

Phenomenological theorising describes the “what” and “how” of phenomena. Genetic phenomenology (concerned with the how) is interested in how meaning comes about, rather than classifications and taxonomies of phenomena (Van Manen 2014: 68). These aims are strongly related to typical aims set out in PbR projects. In Sean McNiff's definition for instance, he characterises research in which a creative artefact is the basis of the contribution to knowledge (PbR), as “the systematic use of artistic process as a primary way of understanding and/or examining reality and/or experience by a researcher through the actual making of an artistic expression, an artefact” (McNiff, 2007: 29). McNiff thus also places the focus on understanding, rather than the generation of new knowledge, and mentions the understanding of experience as a valuable research aim. Scrivener (2002) states that the effect of art is, rather than to

convey knowledge, “to endow deep insight into emotions, human nature and relationships, and our place in the World”. From these statements about the aims of PbR, it is clear that they are closely aligned with qualitative research in general, and particularly close to that of phenomenological enquiry.

Paul Crowther (2009) develops a phenomenology of art that he distills from Merleau-Ponty and Hegel’s thinking. Crowther’s notion of “Phenomenological depth” attests to further connections between the PbR methodology and phenomenology. Phenomenological depth, according to Crowther (2009: 12-16), “centres on the ontological reciprocity of subject and object of experience”. By exploring the tacit enabling conditions of immediate perception; the constitutive role of imagination, [...] the basic structure and scope of self-consciousness, artists can develop the kind of understanding that McNiff requires, and the ‘deep insights’ that Scrivener requires of PbR research, as mentioned above (Crowther, 2009: 12-16).

Phenomenological depth, according to Crowther (2009: 12-16), constitutes “the relation between the visual artwork’s basic ontological status as a material artefact with virtual properties, and

the particular style in which this structure is embodied”. By investigating and troubling this relation, PbR is able to “disrupt the status quo and produce research that is novel both in its contribution to research and in its very nature” (Bolt, 2016: 138).

## 2.8. Chapter summary

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In the preceding sections I outline phenomenological approaches to understanding human Being that underline the importance of contexts and networks of involvements of humans in their world. Not only is human being structured in this way, but also our understanding of our worlds. Yet, phenomenology and postphenomenology do not simply adhere to an either subjectivist or objectivist understanding of Being. Human being-in-the-world is also a being-with that is not passively harmonious and fixed. Rather, it is characterised by a constant strife of becoming, revelation, and concealment. That which is concealed, absent, and withdrawn should not be neglected.

Postphenomenological thought such as outlined in previous sections of this chapter, on the one hand, moves away from the abstract, generalised thought that phenomenology is sometimes accused of and enlarges physical involvement and embodiment; perception and

the senses. On the other hand, there is a danger of being overly concerned with the concrete and that which is present (seemingly revealed from a stable pre-given ground of what Husserl called "Earth") and in the process treating too lightly the immeasurable impact on human experience of that which is absent.

A further aspect of 'human being' that I explore in the previous sections is the shift in thinking away from the world with 'human being' as the structuring centre. In the past decade, schools of thought have emerged that seek to think about the world in terms of objects and materialities without humanity as an essentially unique and primordial presence, as suggested by Bannon's (2011) reinterpretation of Merleau-Ponty's (1968) notion of flesh.

This understanding of human Being offers a way to reconsider human-technology-world relations or, more specifically, photographer-camera-place relations, towards politicising it in a different way, more akin to Cadman's (2009: 6) assessment of ethics and politics approached from a postphenomenological perspective:

In brief, politics and ethics are pulled away from judgment and universals, not simply as a matter of principle but because political and ethical dispositions exist on multiple (affective, emotional,

anticipatory, precognitive, technological, molecular) registers which have thus far been neglected in much of political theory.

### 3. THREE PLACES

In the previous chapter I provided a literature review of sorts which introduces various theories grounded on phenomenological ideas that relate to being in places and the ways in which technologies are integrated in human existence and experience. The following discussions of the three places are essentially reflections on my photographic practice – the act of photographing – in relation to theoretical perspectives introduced in Section 2. The tone of voice therefore shifts between anecdotal telling and theoretical argumentation, which allows me to relate the theoretical more directly to my experience of being in a place with a camera.

Creating a complete and accurate representation of a place with words and images is impossible, as place is such an all-encompassing concept. As Casey writes, “the problem of representing landscape<sup>41</sup> can be seen as a quandary of containment. How is the artist to contain something as overflowing as landscape

[...]?” Such a representation would have to include a full account of the history of the place (from various perspectives), an explanation of the various cultures and individuals (their histories and memories) that shaped the place, the geology and geography of the place, as well as a description of weather patterns and so on. In order to contain the discussions, I therefore limit the aim to giving an account of a specific experience of place rather than to create a complete representation of place. Furthermore, with each place, different limitations apply. For Morgenster, I limit the discussion to aspects of the place that came across my path in my exploration of Morgenster specifically that shaped my experience. Such aspects include informal conversations, found photographs, texts, as well as my own imaginings about the place. For Nietverdiend and Mochudi, the discussions are limited by a focus on aspects that pertain to my own memories together with what the digital rangefinder system offers that the analogue medium used in Morgenster does not. In Kempton Park, the focus is on motion capture versus still photography. For

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<sup>41</sup> I use landscape here in the sense of landscape as the “presented layout of a set of places, their sensuous self-presentation as it were” (Casey, 2001a: 405), and not as representation.

each place I highlight that which is different in terms of my experiences and the technologies. Many of the insights and discoveries regarding the interrelation between photographer, camera, and place apply to all three places, but will not be repeated. For this reason, the sections on Nietverdiend and Mochudi, and Kempton Park become progressively shorter.

Images are used throughout this chapter to show something of the experience of being in the various places. I do not discuss these images as finalised works because in this phase I concentrate on the act of photographing. The images are mainly selected to demonstrate the mediating role of the photographic technology. In some cases, however, the images establish the mood and atmosphere I aim to describe far better than words can.

### 3.1. Morgenster Mission

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I start with Morgenster, a place that existed for me only in images, stories, and my imagination before I returned there for the first time with my parents in 2013. Morgenster Mission was founded by A.A. Louw and seven evangelists, among them Lukas Mokoetele, Jozua Mosaha, Micha Maghato, Gabriel Buys, and Isak Khumalo (the names of the other two evangelists are not recorded), in 1891, about 30 km from Fort Victoria, which was founded only a year earlier, making it the oldest European town in what is now Zimbabwe. Louw chose to build their first dwellings on Mugabe Mountain<sup>42</sup> close to a perennial spring, with the blessings of Chief Mugabe with whom Louw built and retained a cordial relationship (Pretorius, 1999: 74).

Six thousand acres of farmland surrounding Morgenster was initially “given” to the Dutch Reformed Church Mission by Dr Jamieson, the administrator of the territory, but the land was presided<sup>43</sup> over at the time by the chief of the Mugabe clan, Haruzvivishe (Fontein, 2016:

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<sup>42</sup> The name of the mountain is given as such in early mission literature (Odendaal 2016, s.p.), but to my knowledge no mention is made of the specific geological feature in world atlases.

30), who was the last occupant of the Great Zimbabwe ruins (about 7 km north of where Morgenster Mission lies today). The mission station developed slowly at first but by 1941 it had become a training and educational hub. Today the main population consists of children, students, teachers, lecturers, doctors, and patients hailing from across Zimbabwe who attend either the school for the deaf, the teacher’s training college, the theological college, the nursing training centre, and hospital, or the primary and secondary schools or either of the two crèches.

I explore this place alongside the phenomenologies of mainly Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty, allowing the actual experience of place and theories of being-in-the-world to interact. In this I draw heavily on Jeff Malpas’s as well as Edward Casey’s interpretations and applications of Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty’s thought on place and place experience. The triad of self-camera-place is explored through Heidegger’s concept of dwelling as complicated

<sup>43</sup> Ownership of Great Zimbabwe and the surrounding land remains a contested issue today with three groups making claims thereon based on differing points. Great Zimbabwe itself is administered by the National Museums and Monuments of Zimbabwe (NMMZ), a government organization.

by the element of the camera and the act of representing place (not the representations themselves), which is implicated in Heidegger's conception of modern technology.

I set myself the task to try and create an account of the 'strife' between Heidegger's notions of *World* and *Earth* – that which is revealed and that which remains concealed; as well as between active and passive perception. As a result, the dominant tone of this discussion emerges perhaps as nostalgic and naïve. This atmosphere is, however, tempered by the multiple layers of cultural and political experience of place. In this place of my early childhood, my own present lifeworld merges, and clashes with my past and mostly imagined lifeworld, as well as the current context of the place itself. The context of Morgenster is vastly different from the contexts Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty found themselves in. Through this difference I question the universality of Heidegger's concept of

dwelling specifically and, by extension, his understanding of modern technology.

### 3.1.1 Vulnerability and dwelling

On my second return to Morgenster since my family left Zimbabwe in December 1978<sup>44</sup>, we (myself and my assistant) departed at 6:00 that morning, navigated our way through Johannesburg and Pretoria traffic, spent almost four hours on the Beit Bridge border, by which time the sun was setting beautifully in the west, just when the storm clouds were getting ready to offload their burden over the A4. We had to travel the A4 road almost up to Masvingo, in this dark and stormy night. I could not even see the many burnt-out busses, trucks, and cars next to the road that I remembered seeing on my previous visit. We felt that we had no choice but to drive on, on a road we could hardly see, eventually arriving close to midnight, grateful and with an intense awareness of how vulnerable we were.

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<sup>44</sup> In 1978 the Dutch Reformed Church of South Africa withdrew all the missionaries in their employ, due to the escalating intensity of the independence war and one specific incident where missionaries were massacred at Elim mission (Ministry of Information & Rhodesia, 1978). Some missionaries, such as

the Murray family, however, chose to stay and only left in 2016, just after they kindly hosted.

This vulnerability set the tone for my experience of Morgenster. This mood made me intensely aware of my own lack of control over my environment, and structured the way I perceived the place. If I had lost concentration for one moment on the road I might have veered off into the donga that forms most of the edge of the A4 road. Every now and again a spectacular, exhilarating flash of lightning would light up the sky, the looming trees and winding road, assuring us that we are still going somewhere and not traveling endlessly on into a void. This experience could be described as sublime in the sense that it heightened our existential insecurities in reminding us of our “insignificance and the transience of self” (Wells, 2011: 49). The experience of the sublime is, however, associated with a contemplative mood; a place to tally while taking in the view. In this situation I was very much aware of myself, my body in and through its vulnerability, while at the same time caught up in the intense task of driving in a dangerous situation.

While there might be similarities in the situation described above to Heidegger’s example of authentic dwelling – the carpenter working in the workshop, fully engaged in his task, being unaware of subject/object distinctions – the two situations are actually quite far

apart. The peaceful scene of the workshop of the craftsman is far removed from the intensity of the A4 at night in a storm filled with merciless trucks and animals next to the narrow road. It was only later the next day that I could jot down notes and try to understand my being-in-the-world in that situation of sublime exhilaration mixed with calm terror.

In contrast with this experience, Heidegger’s idea of dwelling emerges as a notion of wholeness and unity. It is this understanding of dwelling that Ingold embraces and develops into his influential phenomenological understanding of landscape in *The Temporality of Landscape*. Ingold rejects the separation of the world of nature, which is ‘out there’ and the human which is ‘in here’, “marked out by our mental representations.” (Ingold, 1993: 154) and also opposes

the treatment of nature and [human environments]<sup>45</sup> in dualist terms – “object and subject, the material and the ideal, operational and cognized, ‘etic’ and ‘emic’ ... where the former is said to stand to the latter as physical reality to its cultural or symbolic construction” (Ingold, 1993: 154). Meaning is therefore not merely projected onto or inscribed on the environment as posited in representational theories, but rather, to use another of Heidegger’s terms, “gathered” from it in the process of everyday dwelling (Ingold, 1993: 155).

In Morgenster it is easy to fall under the spell of this notion of human dwelling as together and whole (Wylie, 2009: 282) and perhaps even wholesome and unified. Humans, animals, and natural forms and forces constitute the world in close and mostly direct interaction. Each yard has a vegetable garden with pumpkins, mielies, tomatoes, onions, and covo (a type of kale eaten daily as an accompaniment to the staple sadza). In autumn, guavas ripen on the trees that grow wild in the veld. In summer, the mangoes and pawpaw are abundant.

The avocado trees tower over every house and ripen through early winter to spring. When it rains, countless mushrooms emerge from the surrounding forest floor – many of them edible. Wild fruit are abundant in different seasons. The local community and animals are reliant on this abundance as the Zimbabwean economy all but collapsed since 2008 due to a number of political factors. Thus, during drought (such as what large parts of the country experienced during 2015 until 2016 at the time of my visit in March), many of the local people and animals suffer. In lieu of this state of affairs, most schools and institutions in Morgenster have collective land on which the students work together to grow vegetables, keep cattle, goats, and pigs for their own use.

While the fruit trees were planted here by the missionaries (some of these trees could be 100 years old, or older), the climate and soil, the environment, has sustained these species and allowed the trees to grow massive and to flourish. Bougainvillea (native to South

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<sup>45</sup> I substitute “landscape” here with “human environments” for reasons explained in Phase 2..

America), blue gum (originally from Australia), and Jacaranda trees (native to South and Central America) create continuous canopies



Figure 2: A. de Klerk. 2013. Jacaranda trees in Morgenster with students leaving for the weekend.

next to the lanes and paths (See Figure 2). Moss and other vegetation have grown over things that people built years ago. Areas have been cleared for new buildings. A water supply pipe crosses the forest and hills, as do the power cables. When it rains, especially if lightning strikes, the electricity goes off and the hum of generators start up, allowing the hospital to continue functioning as well as

allowing the many resident students to maintain contact with the surrounding world from which Morgenster seems quite isolated. Boulders as big as houses dot the town in between the buildings (some built in the early 1900s; a gabled reference to the Cape Province in South Africa built in 1952, interspersed with thatched huts), as well as the surrounding forest and hills. If you walk a kilometre or two in any direction, you enter a forest or lookout over the forested valleys; terraced farmland and grazing pastures. The leopards and most wild animals that must have been abundant in the past have since been exterminated but domestic goats and cattle now roam the forests and hills, together with the monkeys and baboons. Paths made by cattle and/or people criss-cross the veld and forest. Dogs protect their territories but mostly roam where they want (except the Murray dogs, Shamwari and Ghonzi, who must stay in the yard, unless someone takes them walking in the forest). The environment offers much, but in this bounty, whatever is withdrawn also renders living organisms vulnerable, forcing people and animals to make alternative provisions. At the time of writing, about 90% of Zimbabwe's economically active population made a living through informal trading and/or subsistence farming (Moyo & Onishi, 2017: A6). With the scarcity of money, people are highly dependent on

environmental conditions. In Morgenster, some funding for the schools and colleges comes from international organisations that support the mission station, but money remains scarce. From the description above, which is admittedly from an outsider's perspective, there seems to be a close integration here between humans and their environment, each being shaped and influenced by the other even though circumstances remain difficult.

Christopher Tilley (1994: 14) quoted Merleau-Ponty's argument that "the human body provides the fundamental mediation point between thought and the world", between 'in here' and 'out there'. Through embodied being-in-the-world, the self merges with the world and is indeed part of the world in the 'flesh', or as Morris develops it further, the 'crossing' of body and world.

For Morris, as for Merleau-Ponty, the world is not pre-prepared for us to discover. There might be (and most likely is) reality external to human experience, but not for us. For me as a human being, reality (which includes my own body) unfolds in relation to myself. Morris starts with the crossing of body (the social, emotional, historical, physical body) and world and then examines how our sense of space emerges from it. Morris focuses on depth as the first dimension –

without depth, neither width, nor breadth, nor time, for that matter, can exist. He contends that depth is lived as social, physical and emotional beings before it can be "objectified through geometry and measurement" (Morris, 2004: 1). Morris therefore draws a distinction between objectified space and the 'sense' of space but persists that objectified space cannot be considered apart from the 'sense' of space. To exclude the emotional, social, and even the imagination from an examination of place can at best produce incomplete truths and skewed perspectives.

When Tilley (1994: 18) describes the role of place in the creation and establishment of human identities as "daily passages through the landscape that become biographic encounters for individuals, recalling traces of past activities and previous events and the reading of signs – a split log here a marker stone there", he is talking about an interaction, but such that the human being emerges as the controlling agent. Tilley, however, does not make mention of the vulnerability that results from direct dependence on one's environment. I would suggest that in such vulnerability lies greater interaction, a greater degree of "mutual shaping" (Sprin, 2010) of people and places. If I take vulnerability (an acceptance of my

physical fragility) as the mood in which I am open to the world, and as what structures my involvement in the world, I open myself to be affected both positively and negatively. In vulnerability, the place is revealed as potentially harmful, and perhaps even threatening. Robert Kirkman (2007: 24) uses the reversibility of Merleau-Ponty's notion of flesh to think about human vulnerability when he writes that in seeing

a rusty nail, a broken window, a falling coconut, a flight of stairs, the water in a swimming pool, a bolt of lightning, a landslide ... I am made more sharply aware of my own fleshly life and the ease with which I can be pierced, sliced, drowned, burned, and crushed.

In opening myself up to the world as vulnerable, the place is revealed as equally vulnerable to my actions.

In this mood of vulnerability, I, however, have choices. I can choose to remain open to be affected, to expose myself to change by staying longer, being more attentive and exploring more, or I can choose to preserve myself, close myself off to change. Such choices are made constantly when photographing in a place and are simple everyday choices such as whether to get up earlier than is comfortable, or whether to engage in a conversation with a stranger

or not. Yet, my choices are influenced by a myriad of factors that are, as with a mood, not easily separated as either purely internal or external.

Ingold (1993: 163-164) makes a strong argument that animate and inanimate objects including aspects of the environment are equally active in the co-constitution of people, societies and place. Bodies and places originate from deep organism-environment interactions which include the rhythmic cycles of nature. Ingold's (1993: 164) rejection of the nature-culture divide is most notable is his statement that "our actions do not transform the world, they are part and parcel of the world's transforming itself".

The particular balance between environment and organism is a contentious issue, especially as it relates to place and identity. By foregrounding the role of place in shaping identities, cultures, and social structures, there is a measure of pre-determination that can become restrictive and destructive. On the one hand there is the danger of stereotypical characterisations of people based on where they come from, and on the other hand there is the danger of excluding people from a place based on them not being local. The organism-environment model proposed by Ingold, while

emphasising the mutual agency, does not allow explicitly enough for individual differences in how people are affected by and affect their environments. Malpas's understanding of dwelling as structured by individual and collective moods and systems of sense-making<sup>46</sup> in relation to places, emphasises variations in how the world is revealed. Such variations, or, as Sokolowski (2000) put it, such manifolds of appearances, is a central insight of phenomenological thought, as is illuminated in the following section.

### 3.1.2 A manifold of appearances

According to Sokolowski (2000: 15), the way things appear to humans is part of the being of things, things appear as they are, and they are as they appear: "appearances are real, they belong to being", but there are different ways that we are conscious of the world, including ourselves. Sometimes we think we are perceiving

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<sup>46</sup> In this section my own 'dwelling' in Morgenster, and by extension the way that I write about this experience is structured by a mood of vulnerability. In the sections that follow, without losing this mood, I explore more collective systems of sense-making such as naming and mapping practices and various ways of looking. This statement also applies to the other places that will be discussed later; especially in connection with Nietverdiend and Mochudi I discuss how my photographic practice becomes part of my dwelling which I discuss in terms of Mitch Rose's notions of marking and claiming as dwelling.

while we are actually not, as when we perceive illusions. We perceive our own way of perceiving as much as the things that appear to us (Sokolowski 2000: 10; Morris, 2004: 22). Sokolowski (2000: 18), in his introduction to phenomenology, describes perception as a dynamic mix of presences and absences: present, past, and potential, anticipated perceptions. Sokolowski uses the classic example of perceiving a cube to illustrate this, but I'm going to take this chance to return to Morgenster by describing my encounter with a boulder just outside the town.

Walking up to the top of what the missionaries called Chief Mugabe's Mountain (Odendaal, 2016) (which is part of the Bingura mountain range), from the mission cemetery, through the forest, I came upon 'Pear Rock', a granite bolder eroded from what must have once been a far greater mass.<sup>47</sup> It was given this name by early

<sup>47</sup> The geography of the Masvingo area is characterised by massive, often smooth granite kopjes or Bornhardts strewn with loose-standing bolders, or castle kopjes. Granite is formed through the solidification of granitic magma that intrudes into other structures but solidifies before it reaches the surface due to its slow motion. Granite is usually more resistant to weathering and erosion than the surrounding rocks and is therefore often exposed as a smooth, rounded outcrop. Further weathering creates loose standing bolders of often fantastical shapes (Campbell, 1997: 101).

missionaries due to its shape resembling a pear from a certain angle. From below, however, it does not look like a pear. It only truly looks like a pear from the hill across a valley, where 'Verjaarsdagrots' (Birthday Rock) lies. From below the rock looms large, with coarse texture and lichen growing dark and mossy underneath and turning lighter towards its top, which I could not quite see from where I stood. As I moved around it, to the other side the looming diminished, but from here I could see a name scratched into it: 'Damien' (see Figure 3). This one name piqued my curiosity and I searched for more names, trying to read the lichen, but other letters or names only half emerged into strange signs and figures. I walked further around the boulder and as I moved, its shape, its outline against the sky morphed. It had been raining, the smell of moss and wet burnt grass mingled with the fresh breeze that came over the forest. The rock is rough and flaky in patches, cold and damp to the touch. Its imposing volume in stirring contrast in contact with my small, fragile hand and body. I hear the pigs squealing from across the valley – it is feeding time. Once past the rock, up a rocky outcrop I saw it from above: it now blended in with the background and seemed smaller, less imposing.



Figure 3: A. de Klerk, 2016, The rock named Damien, 35 mm transparency.

On another evening we walked past this rock again. It was almost dark, and I was a little lost in the forest. The 'Pear Rock' became a beacon, a landmark that showed me the way home. In remembering my previous encounters, I could relive the paths we took and therefore imagine my future self, walking home according to remembered spatial relations. We were trying to get home before it was too dark – no time or light left for me to photograph it this time, as we passed. I had photographed it from various angles on previous encounters.

In these encounters the rock became the centre of a place, not only through direct perception, but also through various modes of intending. In looking at it through the camera and visualising it as image and by seeing it as pear-shaped, I was picturing it; it also appeared as an index – a beacon; the words inscribed on it function symbolically but also changes the way I look at the lichen – trying to read it. While these various ways of intending fit the categories described by Sokolowski (2000: 87): picturing, indicating, symbolising, and perceiving; these modes cannot be clearly disentangled. The variations in how these modes combine and are weighted are infinite and inexhaustible.

These varied experiences of the rock are all different "sides, aspects and profiles" of the same object, but not even all these experiences, qualities, and appearances are the full identity of the rock. As Sokolowski (2000: 20) explains, the identity [of an object] is other than the appearances of it". This explanation of the identity of objects harks back to Plato's ideal forms, but on further examination, Sokolowski's phenomenology is less idealist. The more aspects of the rock I discover, the richer the identity of the object becomes – and this richness can never be exhausted (Sokolowski 2000: 27). Even though these moments are partial, "[phenomenology] shows how perception should not be understood as a barrier between ourselves and things, and how things can be given in various perspectives and still maintain their identity" (Sokolowski 2000: 203).

Every side, profile, and aspect of the rock that I experience is a non-independent part of the rock – they represent different moments of the identity of the rock in a constant play of presences and absences. The rock is a part of the place but can also become a separate piece. Yet I cannot separate the aspect of the rock that has 'Damien' written on it, from the rock as a whole. 'Damien' and 'pear shaped' are different moments of the being of the rock. In the same way, mind

and body are moments of human being (Sokolowski 2000: 27). It is through the naming of parts, pieces, and wholes that language develops, and through which we gain some understanding of the world; yet, once something is named – once there is a word for it – it becomes abstraction, it is reduced, resulting in separations introduced where distinctions should have been made, as in the case of mind and body (Sokolowski, 2000: 21).

The issue of the status or role of language in experience and making sense of the world and ourselves remains unresolved, however. Is language derived from experience, as Sokolowski suggests (as mentioned above) in alignment with Merleau-Ponty's thinking in the *Phenomenology of Perception* (originally published in 1945), or is language the *a priori* ground or soil on which basis we make sense of the world, as Lawlor (2003: 2) suggests is Merleau-Ponty's conviction in his later philosophy? Lawlor argues that in Merleau-Ponty's latter philosophy (encapsulated in his incomplete *The Visible and Invisible*), Merleau-Ponty proposes that "language is no longer secondary to and derived from originary consciousness" (Lawlor 2003: 2).

Language, for Merleau-Ponty, is therefore fundamental rather than derivative. An interesting observation is, however, the way that in some cases language fails. In my attempt to capture and translate (at which point language becomes speech) the experience of, for instance, the solid volume of the rock in writing, there were no words 'ready-to-hand'. In this failure of words, my perception becomes passive and I become open to learn from the thing. In this attempt at translation, however, my memory of the experience deepened and became tacitly more meaningful. From this perspective, the notion of an exchange resonates more than that of either language or experience being prior to the other, as Claude Lefort explains in the *Editor's Foreword* to the English translation of *The Visible and the Invisible*,

speech is between two silences: it gives expression to an experience that is mute and ignorant of its own meaning, but only in order to make that experience appear in its purity; it does not break our contact with the things, but it draws us from our state of confusion with all things only in order to awaken us to the truth of their presence and to render palpable their relief and the tie that binds us to them (Merleau-Ponty, 1968: xxvii).

In cases where words are ready-at-hand, this ready-to-handness caused me to gloss over certain aspects of that experience. Because such words that name things present themselves, without question, their use and their separation from the things they indicate are not considered for their own sake. This exchange between speech (and expression) and experience is therefore not perfect or pure; it is a struggle. This description of the manifold of appearances demonstrates the intricate structure of experience where language and speech, imagination, memory, and direct perception are interwoven in such a way that separating them seems artificial.

### 3.1.3 Naming and mapping

The naming of places is one of the major processes of place-making and cultural identity construction, although it is also a performance of cultural and in some cases individual identity, that become geographic and temporal markers (Bollig & Bubenzer, 2009: 310). In places such as Morgenster, which is characterised by a coming together and clash of various cultures, one finds that place names, created according to a variety of practices, create multiple invisible maps overlaid on the environment. These 'maps' obscure and reveal selectively the relations of the various places within a place,

depending on who is searching and whether the searcher has the key to any specific layer.

As with 'Pear Rock', many rocks and boulders in and around Morgenster have been given names; no one knows by whom precisely. These names sparked old memories of my father's childhood that he could then recount to me as we walked, allowing me to link places to stories. On my second trip, without my father there, I could use these names to navigate. Some names are purely descriptive of shapes or conditions in the environment that caught attention such as 'Akkedisrots' (Lizard Rock); 'Boompie Alleen' (Tree All Alone); 'Finger Rock'; 'Klankrots' (Sounding Rock); and 'Paradys' (Paradise). Other places were named for events that have taken place there, such as 'Verjaarsdagrots', which got its name from marking the picnic spot where the missionaries had the habit of celebrating birthdays.

These place names, engrained in my father's memories, map the place in terms of his happy childhood, before he was sent to boarding school in Villiersdorp, South Africa, as most missionary children were. Other places were pointed out to me as "this is where the bomb hit the hospital in 1978" and "this is the rock from which

we (six children) jumped to land on the outbuilding roof, to get to the mangoes" (see Figure 4), and "this is where I shot my foot by mistake one day", and "we were always warned that there were leopards in this 'koppie' here". In this way my father's memories become an imaginative map for me.

The name 'Morgenster' means morning star and is a reference to 2 Peter 1:19 in the New Testament, which refers to Jesus Christ as the risen morning star (the first and last star to appear in the night sky). This name, originally the name of the founder's home in Paarl, South Africa, was chosen as it represented their religious beliefs and their belief that they were bringing the light of the gospel into the darkness of a heathen land. A farm of six morgen was granted the mission by the British administrator, Dr Jamieson, in 1892. Much of this land has since been returned to local clans. The area surrounding Morgenster is currently called Nemanwa, after the Nemanwa clan who claim to have originated in the area (Fontein, 2016: 22). It is, however, uncertain whether it had a name at all before the time that the missionaries arrived. If it had, the name is not recorded in writing. In this there is a discernible obsession with naming and recording

found in European practices that were possibly not present in the indigenous cultures in the area around the turn of the century.

In Joost Fontein's (2016) record of oral histories recounted by local leaders, places are referred to in relation to historical events; for example, Huhuri (my father remembers going to what they called the Huhuri caves as a child. He remembers it as large rocks and boulders that have collapsed over a stream, creating hollows), just behind Morgenster Mission, which supposedly marks a fake ancestral grave (Fontein 2016: 30). Similarly, In the naming practices of the missionaries, names come about through living in the place: making visual associations in play, generating memories, and making mythological associations. Beyond serving to "humanize and enculture landscape, linking together topographical features, trees, rocks, rivers, birds and animals with patterns of human intentionality" (Tilley, 1994: 24), such practices spiritualise the environment.

My family, their close friends and colleagues, who mostly do not live there anymore, know these names, but the locals whom I spoke to did not know the places by the same names. The valley that the missionaries called 'Die Paradys' (The Paradise), is referred to by locals simply as 'Mupata wekwa Gwenhe', which means 'the valley

that leads to Gwenhe'.<sup>48</sup> The little group of missionaries captured isolated aspects of the environment in their naming. The naming assigns meaning and preserves memories, but by no means inhibits the formation of new meanings and memories. The names I know allowed me greater access to the environment; it gave me a sense that I knew a little about the place, even though this knowledge is severely limited. There is a danger that naming an environment can give one a false sense of comfort, and possibly belonging. At the same time, however, I realise that I am excluded from other aspects of the place because I do not know other names.

Ingold (1993: 171) notes how interpretations of, and stories about places can cloak and reveal aspects of a place at the same time, when he writes that "stories help to open up the world, not to cloak it"; interpretations can add yet more obscuring layers to the "many layers of its representation". The names of places represent interpretations and sometimes even stories that reveal a situated

history of a place and the engagement of a certain group of people with the place that captures perceived moments.

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<sup>48</sup> Gwenhe is the closest village to Morgenster. The village traditionally falls under Chief Chirumbira and is part of a larger village by that name.



Figure 4: A. de Klerk, 2013, The rock (above) and the landing spot (below) viewed from the rock.

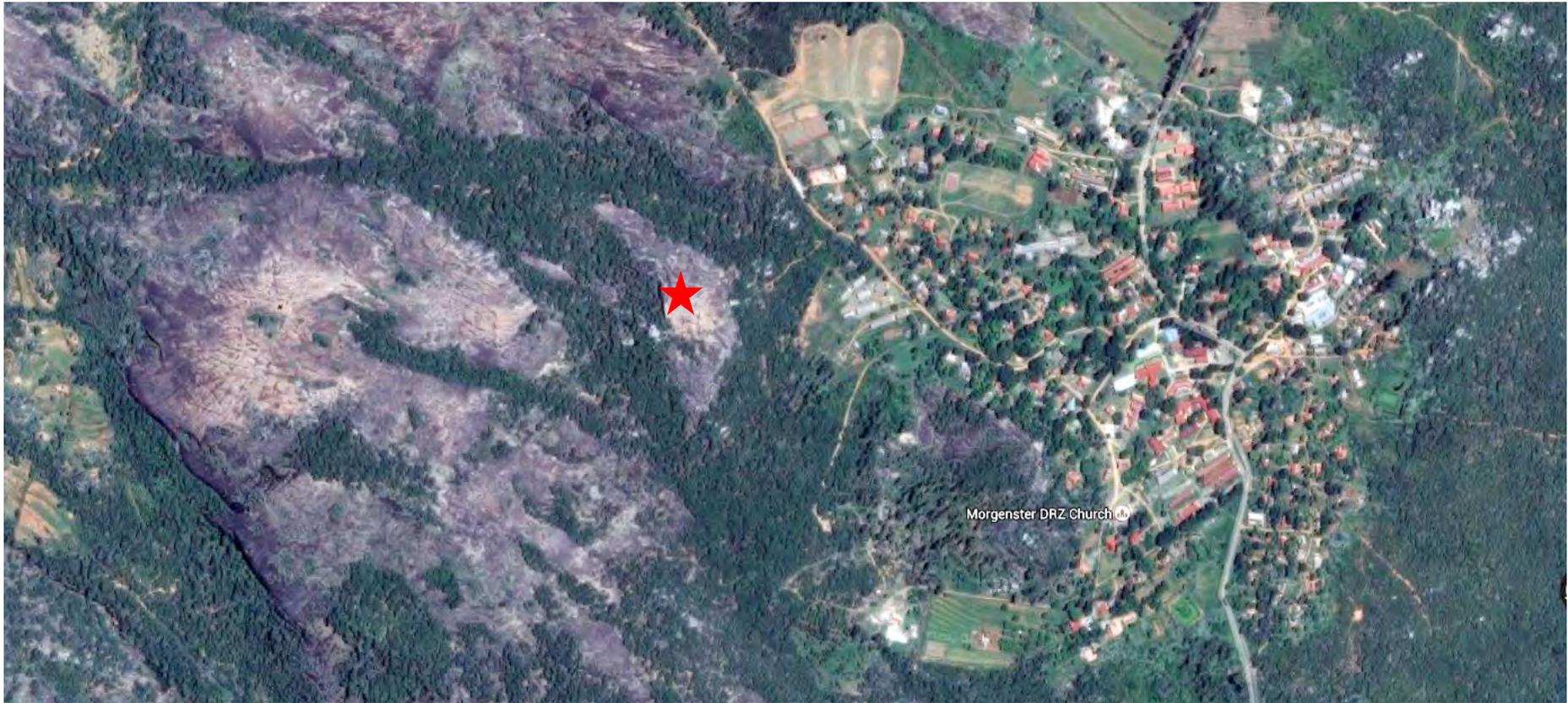


Figure 5: Google Earth® view of Morgenster with The View indicated with the red star.

### 3.1.4 The View and the 'landscape way of looking'

The one spot that everybody in town knows by this name is The View (as indicated with the red star on Figure 5). This is the highest rocky outcrop on the mountain and is used by the whole community. Children play there; lovers go there to be alone; students and staff go there to end their busy days (see Figure 7). There is a well-defined path from the town to The View. Over the rocks this path disappears, but if you know where you can pick it up again you can follow the path all the way down through the forest to the valley and communal tribal grazing pastures. From the perspective of The View, one can see the whole town and how it relates to the surrounding area (see Figure 6). Sokolowski (2000: 208) explains that even in its partiality, every science and situated human perspective "expresses an opinion about the whole"; even if it formulates this opinion in terms of "its own partial view", it is no less an aspect of truth. From this it follows that the better we understand the specific partiality and singularity of sciences as well as situated human perspectives, the better we would be able to achieve the aletheic 'unconcealment' of reality that Heidegger argues for. The Google Earth® view (see Figure 5) from the remote satellite sensor provides a seemingly objective,

disembodied view. As I am using it here, it provides a sense of the size of the town and relative distances. Although it provides more detailed textures than a contour map, it does not really provide much more information as presented in this static image. Google Earth® is, however, not primarily a producer of static images. It allows the user to navigate the globe, changing simulated viewpoints, up to the street-view level. Kurgan (2013: 16-17) states that effective mapping systems such as Google Earth® tend to offer one of two alternatives: "They let us see too much, and hence blind us to what we cannot see, imposing a quiet tyranny of orientation that erases the possibility of disoriented discovery."



Figure 6: A. de Klerk, 2013, Morgenster Mission, looking towards the East from The View.



Figure 7: 2013, Students exploring the town from The View.

The second alternative is that such systems “omit, according to their conventions, those invisible lines of people, places, and networks that create the most common spaces we live in today” (Kurgan 2013: 16-17).

The horizon marks the boundaries of this place, but on a clear day this boundary expands. On a foggy day The View closes in. In this way, places are continuously formed and “can never be the same place twice” (Tilley, 1994: 27) but there is a tension between this continuous becoming and efforts of societies’ and eventually ideologies’ efforts to provide stability or perceptual and cognitive fixity to a place by reproducing dominant meanings and

understandings (Tilley, 1994:27). A good example of this kind of effort is the site of the Great Zimbabwe ruins, about 7 km from Morgenster, just out of view, looking over the town in a north-north-easterly direction from The View. This great enclosure of a past civilisation has been claimed and interpreted by various dominant groups, with vastly differing interpretations and meanings assigned to it.<sup>49</sup>

The View is not directly part of any contemporary political polemic. Much of the original farmland under the Dutch Reformed Church Mission's control was returned to the Nemanwa clan at various stages. Although the matter of land ownership is not resolved among the three rival clans of Nemanwa, Mugabe, and Charumbira in the area, the mission land is not being contested at the moment because it is occupied by the various schools, and hospital. Yet, for me it was the site of internal strife. The View confronts me as a specific way of

engaging with the world which Cosgrove (1984: 1) calls the "landscape way of seeing".

It is precisely this kind of view, and the practice of seeking out such views, which has led to associations of the concept of landscape with specific ideologically problematic modes in which I am involuntarily implicated. By virtue of its name, The View has been designated as a spot from which to appreciate the beauty of nature and its relation to culture – to aestheticise it; turn it into landscape, which is, according to Rod Giblett (2003: 1), "one of the central devices and means by which Europeans and their settler diasporas understand and relate to land". Hughes (2010: xviii) confirms this in the context of white Zimbabweans' relation to the land, levelling the accusation that such relations are symptomatic and indicative of "Other disregarding".<sup>50</sup> White Zimbabweans (or Rhodesians before 18 April 1980), sought to find a way to belong in an unwelcoming environment through negotiation with the land but circumvention of

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<sup>49</sup> For an insightful history of the Great Zimbabwe ruins, see Fontein's (2009) *The Silence of Great Zimbabwe: Contested Landscapes and the Power of Heritage*.

<sup>50</sup> Hughes used this vocabulary of "Other disregarding" to describe the intersection of white identity and ecological concern, which, he argued, should

be distinguished from racism in the strict sense. It is an escape from confrontation with the other, rather than direct racism.

the people (Hughes, 2010: xviii). Hughes found evidence of such 'Other disregarding' in the various ways in which white Zimbabweans represented the landscape and also shaped the landscape, eventually developing a Euro-African landscape aesthetic (2010: 19-20).

Landscape, as a particular way of seeing, is based on the principles of linear perspective: a singular, stable point of view governed by mathematical and geometric principles and therefore associated with objectivity and truth (Wylie, 2007: 68). The germination of the landscape way of seeing is traced by Cosgrove (1984) to the capitalist economic boom in renaissance Italy (Wylie 2007: 61) during which time landscape painting developed and served the function of representing the lavish properties of Italian bourgeoisie. This way of seeing therefore implies ownership and prospect in that it selectively renders the environment as controlled order, and the viewer as powerful subject, separate from the object. In theories of landscape as a way of seeing, the distinction between representations of landscape such as paintings (and photographs) and the physical environment are blurred. The linear perspective way of representation has purportedly become a visual ideology – the

quintessential Western perspective which legitimises capitalist conquest and, by extension, colonialism (Rose, 1993: 91).

In my aesthetic enjoyment, and through the act of photographic representation of *The View*, I am in a sense implicated in the imperial gaze – the colonising blindness that saw a land of emptiness and opportunity in the African continent, a wilderness ready to be civilized and subjected to aesthetic ordering. It is, however, common in literature on landscape to associate the landscape way of looking with a masculine gaze (Bright, 1985, 1992; Rose, 1993: 93-95; Wittenberg, 2004: 6-7). According to Panizza Allmark (2008: 267-268), however, a photographer can choose to remain in the tradition of the "beautiful, the sublime, and the picturesque [which] are masculine aesthetics that are focused on the mastering gaze (the disembodied seer capable of establishing an all-encompassing view of the seen/scenic) (Allmark 2008: 266), which would mean that she allows the masculine hegemony to "form [her] acts of selection, rather than [her] own sensuousness and sensibility" (Allmark 2008: 267). From this perspective, the internal strife I experience in confrontation with *The View* could be described as a struggle between the masculine and the feminine in my way of looking.

In the same way there is a confrontation between the African/European way of being/looking in my experience of The View. In the case of Morgenster and my own family history, the European way of looking could be classified as 'the missionary gaze' which imagines the land as a 'benighted land' waiting for the 'divine light' [of the gospel] to break through the 'gloom' (Van der Merwe, 1953: xi). According to Michael Bollig and Olaf Bubenzer (2009: 22), early missionaries regarded the African landscape as uniform, monotonous, and without end, as it contrasted so greatly with the European landscape they were used to. The Afrikaans missionaries who started Morgenster should be seen as Euro-African rather than European. By all accounts they had a different approach to that of the British colonialists that formed part of the pioneer column. Born in South Africa, they were arguably more acclimatised to the African landscape than the settlers described by Hughes. The missionaries, although they did not integrate fully with the local people, were there because of the people, and therefore could not be said to be guilty of 'Other disregarding'. They learned the local language and culture in order to be able to communicate, yet they practised a form of apartheid at least up until 1980. The missionary gaze, as recorded in literature on Morgenster, is characterised by a symbolic reverence

and looks at the land as imbued with spiritual significance. The land is indeed imagined as dark; 'benighted', but at the same time appreciated, studied, and revered as part of God's ultimately good creation. To symbolise this, a monument in the shape of a candle was erected in 1950 to commemorate the translation of the Bible into Union Shona (Van der Merwe, 1953: 63). The candle (see Figure 9) had an electric light as its 'flame' (which has subsequently stopped functioning), which symbolised the bringing of light through the word of God – the Bible.

In the specific context of Morgenster, the natural world, and in fact all of creation, was seen as pointing to God's greatness. One specific rock formation called 'Finger Rock' was appropriated as a monument commemorating the 50<sup>th</sup> year of existence of the Morgenster Mission station in 1941. A plaque is mounted on the rock, reading: "Neither is there any rock like our God. 1 Sam. 2:2", with the implication that the rock "points ever upwards" (Van der Merwe, 1953: 63). In this context, the 'missionary gaze' would thus refer to a symbolic seeing coupled with imaginative and emotive interpretations.

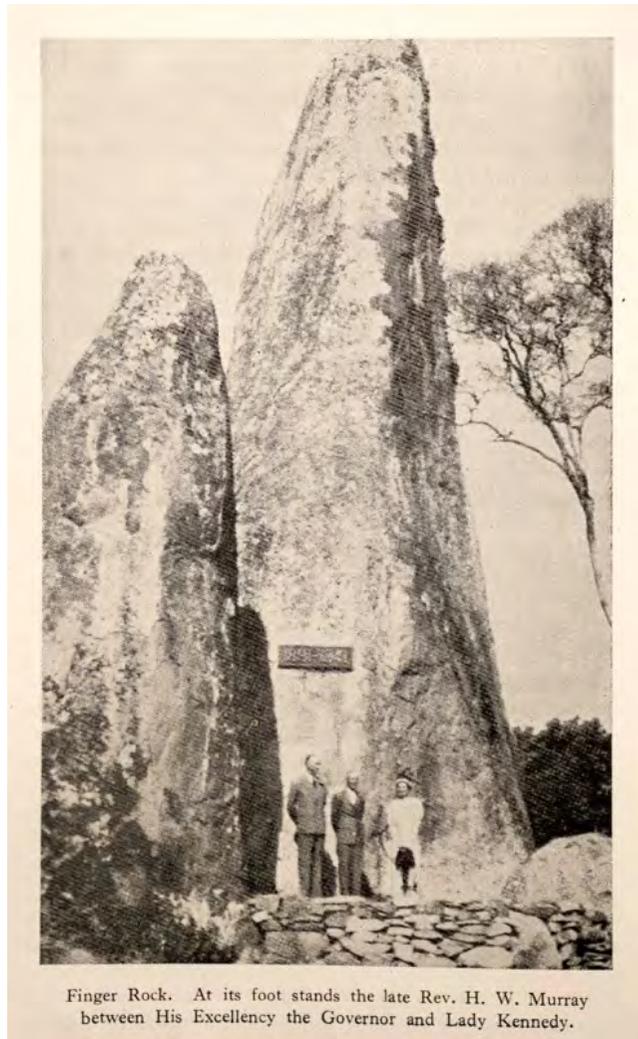


Figure 8: Finger Rock, 1941, as reproduced in *The Day Star Arises* (Van der Merwe, 1953: 62).



Figure 9: Dr S.K Jackson, 1978, *The Candle Monument*.



Figure 10: The Candle monument as reproduced in *The Day Star Arises* (Van der Merwe, 1953: 37).



Figure 11: Courtesy of Susan Murray, date unknown. The copper plaque at the base of the candle monument has subsequently been removed for safe-keeping.



Figure 12: A. de Klerk, 2016, The Candle Monument.

The descriptions above, various ways of engaging with the environment – the various kinds of gaze – are all too often positioned as European imports into Africa, imposing a European way of looking at the African land, on the land. Terrence Ranger (2000: 53) has, however, dedicated much of his career to dispelling the widely held notion that “Europeans in Africa created landscapes by moving mountains, felling trees and diverting streams. They painted landscapes and wrote poetry about them. In short, landscape was something that colonialism did to Africa”. Ranger maintains that “Africans themselves perceived landscape, that they possessed and expressed aesthetic appreciation and invested their environments with moral and symbolic qualities” (Ranger, 2000: 53.) which clashed with European conceptions of landscape.

Ranger provided numerous examples of such African narratives of landscape, but one example in particular resonates with the specific context of the missionary gaze that has to some extent shaped Morgenster as a place. Having been forced to relocate from the central Zimbabwean plateau into the forested bush of the Shangani Reserve during the 1950s, Ndebele speakers in the area, to this day, “retain a picture *ofamagusini*, the dark forest, in which they were

compelled to settle” (Ranger, 2000: 58). This dark forest is portrayed as evil, a place to be converted before it could be made habitable (Ranger, 2000: 58). While I would not attempt to use this example to generalise and state that this is a typical and widely held conception of landscape, it does show that there are similarities in Euro-African missionary and African conceptions of landscape. Both Euro-African and African sensibilities find this place encoded with cultural meanings and values, which seems to support Mitchell’s view that before all secondary representations, such as by painting or photography, among many others, “landscape is itself a physical and multisensory medium (earth, stone, vegetation, water, sky, sound and silence, light and darkness, etc.) in which cultural meanings and values are encoded” (Mitchell, 2002: 14).

Lamin Sanneh (1987) argues that the first conversions that happened at mission stations were often the missionaries themselves who had to adapt to their new environments and learn new cultures and languages in order to communicate effectively. According to Sanneh, they could not do this without being changed themselves. In a similar way, imperialism, according to William Mitchell (2002: 9),

is characterised by “a complicated process of exchange, mutual transformation, and ambivalence”.

As the Ndebele-speaking people in the above example felt the need to change the environment, so the white missionaries also proceeded to make their new environment more familiar and inhabitable to their Afro-European sensibilities. As mentioned before, they planted trees and made gardens (Figure 13), but also built European-style buildings (Figure 14; Figure 15), even though this ‘conversion’ of the land was achieved through vastly differing practices.



Figure 13: A. de Klerk, 2016, Garden around the house reserved for the principal of Morgenster Mission, 35 mm transparency.

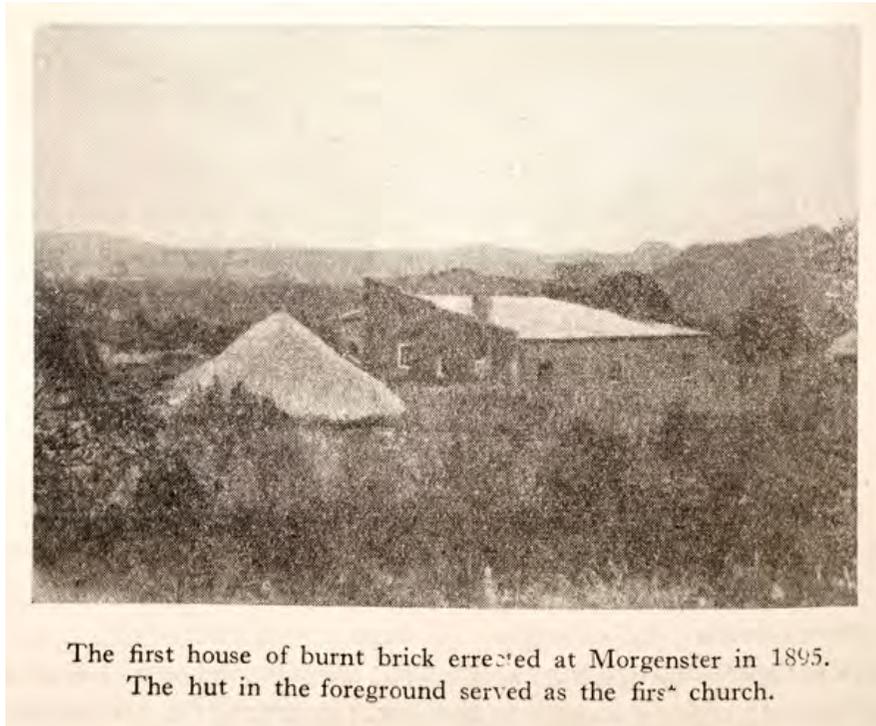


Figure 14: "The first house of burnt brick erected at Morgenster in 1895", as reproduced in *The Day Star Arises* (Van der Merwe, 1953: 20).



Figure 15: Anonymous. n.d. The first hut built in Morgenster, photographic print copied in 1978 by S.K. Jackson.

In spite of these tensions, I enjoy The View with the cooling breeze on my sweaty body. The physical experience of the place overpowers the ideological imaginings I entertain. As I stand on the edge, I am exhilarated by the sense of space evoked by what I see; my vulnerability in relation to this mass of rock, and the trees far below. This sense of space is produced by how my vision allows me to imagine and anticipate a way to move. It allows me to find paths to get to other places. Much of the environment, as much of the complexity of this place, remains hidden from sight from this point of view, so much so that the possibility of its being cannot present itself to me. I am drawn further to discover what lies beyond obscuring objects such as outcrops and hills, but for now, I linger because the sun is setting. I will find out on another day what the alternative viewpoints would reveal and obscure. From this place I can see a great deal of the surrounding environment and how places are composed together, but at the same time I see the limits of my perception in the appearance of the horizon, my 'horizon of significance'.

My situatedness is not static. Movement to and from this point is implied in my being here at this point in time. Morris (2004: 42) writes

at length about the dynamic nature of human vision, emphasising that it is reliant on the interaction of body and environment in movement. Yet, The View is a place to stand or sit and take in the view, even if it is only for a short while. It is a place from which, after tallying a while, one can move on, but most often from which to return, because it is a destination in itself.

The View calls up the image of countless individuals from many cultures who have stood or sat here looking. Did the original Chief Mugabe ever stand here or did he run directly past this place with his band of fighters, to the cave just south of this spot, where he hid from the other clans in the Nemanwa and Charumbira version of the story? I have found photographs my father took of our family sitting here; the Murray family album includes many images of The View. I imagine my father and his friend, Henry Murray, as children, jumping around too close to the edges of these rocks. I can imagine that they were not too concerned with viewing the sunset, but rather concerned with playing 'monkey' in the last light of day.

The View represents the tension between the cultural embedded ways of engaging with places, such as encapsulated in the 'landscape way of seeing' and lived embodied experience – the

anticipation and imagination of movement, and enjoyment of the space my eyes allow my body to perceive. One cannot separate movement from perception, but as soon as I put down my tripod, focus the camera lens, and look through the viewfinder, I pause, reflect, assess, compose, decide – I look at the world as an image. What I hope to show, however, is that this process of imaging is entangled with histories, languages, and cultures as much as with personal situated and embodied perspectives. Rather than simplifying and reducing the complexity of experience of place, the mediation of this experience through a camera complicates it further. With the camera comes the burden and inspiration of representational traditions and conventions that have to be navigated.



Figure 16: S.K. Jackson, 1978, People admiring The View.



Figure 17: S.K. Jackson, 1978, Looking East from The View.



Figure 18: A. Laurie, 2013, *The View to the west of Morgenster*, with my parents also photographing *The View*.

### 3.1.5 The camera

Light reflected from the environment is projected into the viewfinder of my camera. It is a single point perspective through a 28 mm lens and viewfinder which is slightly scratched and abraded from long use. I chose to work with my father's old Minolta single-lens reflex (SLR) camera and 28 mm lens exclusively, with a hand-held light meter, as the batteries for this camera cannot be sourced any longer. My father photographed mainly on transparency film with this camera. Because he processed by hand, the direct positive process saved time and money. The slides could be shown immediately after processing.

During my first return to Morgenster Mission in 2013, I photographed the place in an experimental mode. I was unsure how to represent this place as a part of a PhD project. I was extremely conscious of my own point of view, finding it restricting and perhaps even incriminating. With my digital rangefinder camera, I attempted to assume the viewpoint of the not yet two-year-old girl that I was when we lived here: looking from a low perspective; looking close at fascinating details, but at the same time showing my limited access to this place as an outsider even though it is my father's 'musha' (place of birth, which means 'home' in the Shona and Karanga cultures).

The experience of the first trip prompted me to delve into the history of the place as well as my parents' histories with the place. Looking through my father's old slides again, brought me to the realisation that the experience of viewing the illuminated slide in a dark room was an integral aspect of my imagination of the place because this is how my father showed us his slides. The dimming of one's current surroundings allows the images to draw the viewer into the projected or magnified image world. The experience is similar to a cinematic experience where one suspends disbelief and gets drawn into the imagination of the director and cinematographer. The old slides themselves are precious originals that show the passage of time: some are discoloured, scratched, full of dust, and/or eaten by mould.

While viewing the projected image of the environment in the viewfinder of the film camera, I involuntarily imagine what it would be like to view a slide of what I see as a projected image on a wall in a darkened room or a glowing, magnified image in a slide viewer with its own light source. I look at relationships of shapes in the landscape to each other, to myself, and to the horizon. It was at The View that I realised that I wanted to work with the 28 mm lens exclusively. I photographed one or two images with the 300 mm

mirror lens but decided that this was too far removed from my experience of place. It was too difficult to show relations of objects in space. The 28 mm lens forced me to walk 10 steps closer whenever I looked through the viewfinder. I could be physically close to whatever I was aiming to photograph, but still show objects in relation to one another and the horizon. After half a day of photographing exclusively with the 28 mm lens, I internalised this perspective. I did not have to look through the viewfinder to know where I had to stand to get the required perspective. I automatically moved closer and knew how high or low and at what angle to set the tripod. Are the projected light, shapes, textures, and colours I see in the viewfinder an image of the real world? If a picture is "arrangements of marks on a surface" (Walden, 2008) it is not a picture. It is a picture in the sense that Sokolowski (2000) meant – that a picture is always of something else – only as much as the view through a telescope or a microscope, or for that matter, through spectacles. It is perhaps more accurate to refer to this optical effect as a *possible picture*, which is to some extent perceived and to some extent imagined, until I press the shutter release, at which point it becomes a latent image.



Figure 19: A. de Klerk, 2016, *Across the valley*, photographed with 300 mm lens, into the sun.

When photographing through a viewfinder on an SLR camera, the precise moment photographed is never seen through the lens. This possible picture is an optical effect in direct causal relationship to the environment. At the moment the shutter release is pressed, the mirror flips up to let the light through to the film or sensor. I have faith that the image that missed my eyes has caused imperceptible changes to the molecular structure of the film in my camera. My experience of being outside, in a place, is therefore of slipping in

and out of various intentional modes and half-modes of perception, imagining, and remembering, but not quite picturing. The picturing that happens with a film camera is internalised in imagination and remembering.

By identifying the differences between these various ways of intending, we gain a richer understanding of reality and our way of experiencing it (Sokolowski, 2000: 50). It is, however, only afterwards, upon recollection and reflection, with a certain detachment, that distinctions can be made. In my experience of being in *Morgenster*, all of these modes are *infolded* with the camera. With reference to Ihde, Donna Haraway (2008: 249) states that “technologies are not mediations, something in-between us and another bit of the world. Rather, technologies are organs, full partners, in what Merleau-Ponty calls ‘infoldings of the flesh’”. The word ‘in folding’ captures the notion of intertwining and reversibility of the sensing and sensible.

The camera has been described by numerous photographers as an “extension of the eye”, most notably by Henri Cartier-Bresson in a 1958 interview. Cartier-Bresson places great emphasis on the act of photographing rather than technique and post-production. He often

describes the way he photographed as to “put the mind, the eye and the heart along the same line of sight. It’s a way of life” (As quoted by Durden, 2013: 68). Photography, for Cartier-Bresson, is therefore an embodied act, but the phrase ‘extension of the eye’, is a little misleading, because each specific photographic system extends vision differently. The directedness, or the field of any specific photographic system, is vastly different from the human visual system. Dziga Vertov (1992: xix) used film, for instance, specifically to capture that which is missed by the human eye. Rather than a mere extension of the eye, photography is an augmentation and a transformation of human vision. In alignment with the mind and heart, as Cartier-Bresson put it, the photographic system is in turn manipulated and directed in a specific way. I would also add here that in the context of landscape photography, the place itself has an active role in this process. Mind, body, camera, and place are infolded together.

The image of a fold replaces the act-object structure of intentionality in Merleau-Ponty’s thinking. Morris (2004) uses the metaphor of folding origami figures to illustrate this concept of infolding. He explains that the paper records the process of folding, but still

remains only paper. Also, the various facets that emerge due to the folds are all still part of the same piece of paper. The fold itself is nothing in itself. Looking through a camera, I perceive the infolding of reflected light from the environment (and myself) through the specific lens, and then through the lenses and retinas of my eyes, which are an extension of my brains and nervous system. Looking alongside the camera, the lens’s way of rendering perspective and light is infolded into my vision through imagination and memory, which is emphasised in the use of film (as opposed to a digital sensor) that records an ‘invisible’ latent image.

In the above section I have explored the way that the camera becomes part of the flesh of perception and experience of place. The camera is an object in the world but brings with it a way of looking at the world that is physical, optical, historical, and cultural. It is both an object of perception and incorporated (through extension, augmentation, and reduction of the visual faculty) into the perceiving subject, once again emphasising that such distinction is artificial. In becoming this mind-body-camera-place being, the photographic technology is incorporated in my being (which extends beyond my body), with all its baggage.

### 3.1.6 Photography as modern technology and/or art?

The photographic equipment, which implies the intent to represent, picture, or depict,<sup>51</sup> if considered from a Heideggerian perspective, could be seen as 'ordering' my being-in-the-world as a controlling force. For Heidegger, modern machine-based technology reveals the earth in a mode of "challenging forth" as opposed to handicraft that reveals in a mode of 'bringing forth', which Heidegger links to *poesis*, or a revealing of truth. In Heidegger's (1977: 7) words,

the revealing that rules throughout modern technology has the character of a setting-upon, in the sense of a challenging-forth. That challenging happens in that the energy concealed in nature is unlocked, what is unlocked is transformed, what is transformed is stored up, what is stored up is, in turn, distributed, and what is distributed is switched about ever anew.

This mode of revealing transforms all being into "standing reserve", which means that "everywhere everything is ordered to stand by, to be immediately at hand, indeed, to stand there just so that it may be on call for a further ordering" (Heidegger 1977: 8). Diarmuid Costello

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<sup>51</sup> Walton (2013: 251) distinguishes between picturing and depicting, where picturing has to do with the actual appearance, visual form, and content of the

(2012: 104) provides a possible Heideggerian interpretation of photography's role as modern technology as ordering the world as "aesthetic resource" within the framework of camera designers and developers, changing appetites of photographic and art industries, communication networks, and economic pressures. This interpretation implied by photographic technology – of the world as aesthetic resource – might be correct, but it occludes and obscures all other possible ways that the world can be revealed to us, as well as the fact of its being obscured (Heidegger, 1977: 14). The camera therefore reveals the world as something to make pictures of, for aesthetic consumption. The specific way that this happens could be linked again to the 'landscape way of seeing' which, through photography, culminates in a single-point, linear, and ocularcentric perspective.

Jay (1993) discusses at length how ocularcentrism in Western cultures, based essentially on linear, single-point perspective, contributed to the impetus for the development of photographic

image, and depiction has to do with the proclaimed intent of the artist as when J.M. Cameron photographed her nieces to depict wood nymphs or angels.

technology and the resultant mythic association of photographic images with modern conceptions of truth, knowledge, and reality (Wells, 2011: 40). Geoffrey Batchen (1997: 68) traces in the narratives of the proto-photographers' constant referrals to the images they managed to fix on whatever substance, as the action of nature, or nature drawing 'herself', as Henry Fox Talbot put it in a 1839 paper. Batchen (1997: 69) further explicitly connects the invention of photography with the desire of its inventors to picture nature, which was often articulated in the aesthetic and technical terms of landscape. At the time of the invention of photography (early 1800s), notions of landscape invariably "fit within the framework provided by the aesthetic theory known as the picturesque" (Batchen, 1997: 69) which, together with the categories of the beautiful and the sublime via Edmund Burke, serve as part of Western cultural heritage, which is often criticised for driving a Romantic conception of landscape and indeed of nature (Brook, 2012: 111). According to Batchen (1997), proto-photographers and early photographers were very much conscious of the now widely accepted paradoxical nature of

photography as both cultural and natural; subjective and objective. As the photographic process improved, however, and started looking more 'realistic' in comparison with early Talbotypes and Daguerreotypes, among other processes, its role as objective documentary medium started to overshadow its expressive aspects. In 1839, on viewing a Daguerreotype for the first time, Samuel Morse described what he saw as "Rembrandt perfected" as well as "like that of a telescope in nature", while in 1983 Roger Scruton still argued that photography could be described as a mirror with a memory.<sup>52</sup> Since Jakob Riis's (1890) use of photography as a 'weapon of social change' in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, photography was widely used to provide evidence for various causes and expressed widely held associations of photography with the representation of truth and objective knowledge. Within this understanding of photographs as proof, the survey photographs of Timothy O'Sullivan created in the early 1870s, for instance, present a specific kind of knowledge that relates to Levin's description of the *assertoric gaze*, which "tends to see from only one perspective, one standpoint, one and only one

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<sup>52</sup> A phrase first used by Oliver Wendell Holmes (Newhall, 1982: 22)

position" (Levin, 2001: loc. 439). Even though O'Sullivan's purpose was to create pictures to be used as illustrations for scientific reports, his working process exhibits some aesthetic considerations (Snyder & Allen, 2012: 191-192).

The problem with linking *assertoric* truth with the way photographs represent the world, and specifically those of O'Sullivan, is that it is seldom the case that only one photograph of a subject is taken. Even in the 1850s, when O'Sullivan and the early pioneer photographers of the American West recorded the westward move with cumbersome glass plates and mobile darkrooms, multiple frames were often taken. Peter Galassi (1981: 142) cautions that in Sullivan's case, "these were not multiple attempts at a single view but series of interdependent pictures", with the express purpose of providing different views on the same subject. Whether or not O'Sullivan's survey photographs should be read in aesthetic terms or not has been a matter for debate since they were first published by Beaumont Newhall in 1939 as proto-modernist views (Snyder, 2002: 192). Joel Snyder and Neil Walsh Allen, however, hold the view that the images are at least in part pictures (with some aesthetic purpose beyond pure documentation).

This process of framing a scene transforms the uncontrolled disorder of the world into controlled compositions (Wittenberg, 2004: 102), even outside of, or in tension with, traditional landscape conventions (Mitchell, 2002: 25), thereby further conforming to Heidegger's (1977: 7) characterisation of modern technology as controlling, ordering and "challenging-forth" rather than the less transformative "bringing-forth" (1977: 6) which relates to the aletheic gaze, which Levin (2001: para. 7816) describes as:

[t]he gaze associated with truth as unconcealment ... which tends to see from a multiplicity of standpoints and perspectives: with an awareness of contextuality, of field and horizon, of situational complexity; and with a corresponding openness to the possibility of different positions.

If one follows this line of thinking that photography, being complicit in the modern technological project of transforming everything, including ourselves, into a 'standing reserve' of aesthetic contemplation, through a controlling and ordering mode geared

towards maximum output with minimum input,<sup>53</sup> it would be easy to assume that photography cannot possibly be part of what Heidegger thought would be able to resist against the “supreme danger” presaged by the final triumph of a technological understanding of Being (Costello, 2012: 104). When Costello explains that, for Heidegger, “[good] art holds out a ‘saving power’: the promise of a different, non-domineering relation to beings” (Costello, 2012: 104), the actual question is whether photography can reveal the world in a different way, not as a standing reserve.

In this section I have drawn together Heidegger’s interpretation of modern technology as a framework that transforms the world into standing reserve, with the landscape way of seeing that has been associated with landscape photography. In this way, photographic technology mediates human-world relations and can be seen as transformative ordering, while at the same time representing a specific conception of truth as a way of looking: the *assertoric* gaze. The question in the paragraph above can therefore be formulated in

terms more directly relevant to the present study as whether or not I, in my photographic representation of place, can operate outside of the ‘landscape way of seeing’.

This question is not the same as whether or not photography can be art. Photography has long been accepted as an art medium on the basis of various grounds. The question is rather whether photography can simultaneously reveal and let the world reveal itself in such a way that it fits with the *aletheic* gaze – Heidegger’s notion of the happening (*Ereignis*) of truth, which is both passive in allowing the world to reveal itself, and actively being open to such revealing; searching out other possibilities. Morris (2008: 1) points out an affiliation between Heidegger’s concept of *Ereignis* and Merleau-Ponty’s formulation of the reversibility of perception in the form of the flesh of being. In both these concepts, Morris finds that “activity and passivity are irreducible to one another, yet are implicated in each other. There is a sort of gap in the relation between activity and passivity that allows something novel to be engendered” (Morris,

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<sup>53</sup> The mechanised process of creating a basic realistic representation of a scene is far less time consuming than manual processes, and more accurate, thereby requiring minimum input for maximum output.

2008: 2). In the following section I want to explore the possibilities of photography as representing the aletheic gaze in the representation of place, and this in spite of Merleau-Ponty's persuasion that photography cannot capture this reversibility that he finds in painting, specifically that of Cezanne's landscapes (Merleau-Ponty, 1993; Morris, 2008). In *Eye and Mind*, Merleau-Ponty frames photography in the same terms as his description of the rationalist, "Cartesian sketcher" who, in creating the sketch, poses a question to which he already knows the answer. He already has the formula for drafting the sketch. As Morris (2008: 5) explains,

the Cartesian sketcher sketches the mountain as given, all present, to the mind, and this activism fixes the mountain as passive, whereas the painter paints the mountain's action, the way it works the light and sun so as to actively melt back and forth from solid into cloud.

Indeed, Morris goes on to reiterate that "this is what the painter can capture in paint, and what the photographer (according to Merleau-Ponty) could not capture: the thing as active, as operating with light so as to shift from solid into cloud" (Morris, 2008: 5).

In trying to capture places in a way that acknowledges my own 'being' in the place, in spite of Merleau-Ponty, I must necessarily

imbue these images with the sense of passing time which can be revealed in the short-term actions of people (as perhaps captured in Figure 19), or changing light, or in the realisation that the topography of the place comes about so slowly that it seems static, or simply in the changing of light (Figure 19) and movement of clouds. But my being-in Morgenster also involves a changing of my imagination of the place.

In the face of associations of photography with the rationalist, Cartesian, *assertoric* way of seeking and finding truth in the world, "Cartier-Bresson's first masterstroke is to assimilate the camera to his body" (Durden, 2013: 68). Incorporating the camera into the body of the photographer as an extension of the eye is a decidedly Merleau-Pontian move, as Merleau-Ponty himself re-stated in *Eye and Mind* that "[o]ur organs are not instruments; on the contrary, our instruments are added-on organs" (Merleau-Ponty, 1993). This very same notion is what Ihde incorporates into his postphenomenological analysis of human-technology-world relations, labelling it mediation through embodied relations (see overview in Section 2.2). In its being incorporated into the body as an organ, or extension of an organ of visual perception, it should

share in the entanglement of activity and passivity. Cartier-Bresson (1958) confirms this in his description of how he photographs as a way of life, a dance of watching, waiting, pouncing and constructing – activity and passivity.

This active-passive interchange of ‘infolded-transformed-mediated’ human vision seems to oppose the inclusion of photography into Heidegger’s framework of modern technology, in which the world is ordered forth and controlled. Yet it remains a continuing struggle between the state of mind and intensions of the photographer, the mechanical, optical rendering ascribed to photography and the world as it would reveal itself, rather than a fight already won. The camera, even as embodied, infolded, mediating technology, is thrown into the midst of the strife between Earth and World.<sup>54</sup> In Wheeler’s assessment of Heidegger’s description of this strife he writes that

[n]atural materials (the earth), as used in artworks, enter into intelligibility by establishing certain culturally codified meanings – a world in the sense of *Being and Time*. Simultaneously, however, those

natural materials suggest the existence of a vast range of other possible, but to us unintelligible, meanings, by virtue of the fact that they could have been used to realize those alternative meanings. The conflict, then, turns on the way in which, in the midst of a world, the earth suggests the presence of the mystery (Wheeler, 2011: 73).

To insert the camera into this assessment is a complex task, but one could muse that the natural materials used in the making of photographs is reflected light, recorded visibly through chemical processes that are possibly as much part of Earth as paint and stone, equally presenting other unrealised possibilities. The camera does not erase this mystery of what remains concealed, even though it does transform light into chemical action that seems to stop time even though it augments human vision.

Formulating the mediating role of the camera in terms of embodied relations that partake of the active-passive interchange of embodied perception, however, does not erase the problematic “culturally encoded meanings” that have accumulated around landscape photography, and these also remain very much active in the

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<sup>54</sup> See Section 2.2.1

following section where I give an account of how this strife plays out in the context of Morgenster.

### **3.1.6 Control, surrender, and impotence**

We don't know why we press at a certain moment. It comes, it is there, it's given. Take it. Everything is there, it is a question of chance, but you have to pick and force chance to come to you. There's a certain will (Cartier-Bresson, 1958).

Costello's (2012: 112) conclusion to the question of photography's participation in Heidegger's 'saving grace' is that "photographic art resists technology to the extent that it is mind-dependent". I would, however, argue that photography resists technology to the extent that it embraces the push and pull of active/passive perception. It is a continuous turning between control and surrender to both the environment and the photographic medium – the technology. To surrender implies that one chooses to relinquish control. In an environment such as the Morgenster area, there are, however, situations where one is powerless to choose to control. Sometimes the environment offers situations and surprises that render the perceiving subject impotent. While I can always choose where and when to look, and when to press the shutter, the environment also

draws my look with what it offers and refuses. In making sense of one's environment – in the passivity and activity of perception – there is an intermingling of imagination and perception, further complicated by the camera.

In planning my second photographic encounter with Morgenster, I made a few decisions regarding what kinds of images I wanted to achieve. These decisions were influenced by my previous trip to Morgenster together with subsequent conversations with my parents. In this preparation I realised that Morgenster still existed for me largely through my imagination, even though I had fresh memories of the place. From stories I heard repeatedly while growing up and while we were there together, Morgenster formed in my imagination simultaneously as the place of my father's happiest childhood memories and as a place of tense anxiety for my family during the war.

Visually, my imagination is also shaped by my father's photographs of the place that I had been going through in the months prior to my second trip. These images are often backlit, with strong shadows, as slide film tends to provide. The areas of brightly lit textures and shapes surrounded by dark or dimly lit areas resembled how I

visualise the place in my imagination, and of course, having seen some of these images as a child, they have directly shaped my imagination as well. My plan was to photograph mainly in such directional light, which would enable large parts of the frame to remain dark.

During the week of my second trip to Morgenster, however, only the first morning offered me direct sunlight. Most of the rest of the week was heavily overcast, if not actually raining. The kind of rain that often occurs in Morgenster is what is called *guti* in Shona – a dense mist-rain. I had hoped that I would be able to photograph in *guti* while I was there, as I had briefly experienced it during my first trip. My parents recounted to me how nervous they were during such weather which could last for two weeks or more. The various fighting factions during the independence war of the 1970s could come right up to a house or a person without being seen. *Guti* made my parents feel cooped-up and anxious. The mist, in my mind, could also visually express the experience of trying to visualise a place only seen in photographs and heard about in stories. Certain elements of the place emerge while the rest remains undefined; although, even in

imagination, one has a vague sense of the space of a place and its objects in relation to each other.

In general, with the exception of studio still-life photography, and to some extent studio portraiture, photography is susceptible to chance. Even when one works with a tremendous budget, the given world is never fully predictable. Irrespective of the photographer's intentions and mindset, and thorough planning, weather patterns, wind and temperatures, people and animals' actions can cause unexpected incidents that the photographer did not intend. In some cases, such incidents interfere with the photographer's vision, but in most cases, it is these surprises that the photographer anticipates and hopes for. In landscape photography there is a dance between what the environment offers or refuses, what the photographer is ready and willing to capture, and the imagined previsualisations of desired images. While photographing in a place, I experience the exhilaration of unsuspected possibilities together with the knowledge that anticipated possibilities might never be realised.



Figure 20: Dr S.K. Jackson, 1978, Morgenster home garden with myself as little girl and our dog, Teddie.



Figure 21: A. de Klerk, 2016, Morgenster home garden.

I exert some control by choosing a system that I am familiar with – in this case a 35 mm film camera with a 28 mm lens, a small tripod, and a hand-held light meter. I could choose to have more control by working with a range of lenses or a zoom lens, as well as light sources, filters, and any number of photographic gadgets. By choosing to work only with one lens and with slide film without filters and artificial light sources, I surrender a great deal of control. I retain a measure of control only of where I stand, my angle of approach, and precise framing as well as depth of field, exposure, and how motion is captured by choosing a shutter speed. Even with these variables there are restraints and limitations. The film has a specific way of reacting to light, and the lens has a minimum and a maximum aperture and a specific focusing distance. The lens has specific characteristics that are visible in how light flares and how out-of-focus points of light are rendered. The tripod provides some freedom in permitting slower shutter speeds with smaller apertures without camera shake but has limitations of its own: It limits how I can stand, where I can go, and how I can move. In the low-light conditions of photographing early in the morning, late at night, and in rainy conditions, the tripod allows me to create images with a measure of crispness that would be impossible without it, but any

movement of objects, people, or animals necessarily then becomes blurred.

Landscape photography therefore involves a constant flow of degrees of control and surrender, in which I as a photographer respond to what is given in the environment as well as by the chosen photographic system. I can, however, choose whether I want to exert more control or surrender further in any given situation. A fixed photographic system such as what I chose to work with implies both surrender and control. One could argue that the 28 mm lens, for instance, forces me to respond to what I experience by moving my whole body. Another opposing argument could be that the fixed 28 mm lens imposes a specific, premeditated optical perspective on the environment. Choosing from a range of lenses for every situation could be seen as more responsive to the experience of spatial relations between objects and myself. As explained earlier, however, I started working with a range of lenses and then made the choice of which lens to carry on with, in response to my experience in and of the place.

The effort to capture a sense of dwelling in the environment is to try to resist technology with technology. I do this by trying to respond

directly to place. But place is not only experienced through direct perception. Morgenster, for me, is experienced as much through imagination, which in turn relies heavily on memory. Yet I cannot merely impose my experiences on the environment. I am reliant on finding or discovering moments where my direct perception resonates with other ways of intending. This 'resonance' is not necessarily a cognitive realisation. It would probably be better described as a result of being affected by the environment. The issue of how much of my perception can be direct and unmediated – how much I can be affected directly by the environment – remains unresolved. In the quote below, Heidegger explains that any form of perception already functions within the task-orientated world of human Being:

What we 'first' hear is never noises or complexes of sounds, but the creaking waggon, the motor-cycle. We hear the column on the march, the north wind, the woodpecker tapping, the fire crackling... It requires a very artificial and complicated frame of mind to 'hear' a 'pure noise'. The fact that motor-cycles and waggons are what we proximally hear is the phenomenal evidence that in every case Dasein, as Being-in-the-world, already dwells alongside what is ready-to-hand within-the-world; it certainly does not dwell proximally alongside 'sensations'; nor

would it first have to give shape to the swirl of sensations to provide a springboard from which the subject leaps off and finally arrives at a 'world'. Dasein, as essentially understanding, is proximally alongside what is understood. (*Being and Time*, as cited in Wheeler, 2011: 25).

Heidegger places 'pure' perception within the structures of ready-to-handness – shaped by cultural practices and histories. In his later work, however, Heidegger emphasised that understanding (or the 'happening' of truth) occurs through the coming together of the "fourfold": nature and culture. Heidegger's explanation evidently did not fully answer Gibson when he asks in his pioneering article, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*, to what extent "'values' and 'meanings' of things in the environment can be directly perceived (Gibson, 1986: 127). An extension of this question, relevant to this study, is to what extent this perception is occluded / made possible / enhanced / shaped by technological mediations, ideologies and language; in other words, to what extent is meaning situated external to the observer?

Gibson (1986) argues that meaning is situated in the environment reciprocally constituted by ground, medium, and objects. For Morris (2004: 16), Gibson's account and ecological psychology in general

falls short because they reduce the “crossing of the body and the world” to pre-existing fixed laws of optics and physics “specified in advance”. Morris contends that this does not account for the “labiality” and “sens” of human perception. Instead, Morris seeks “a point at the ‘turn of experience’ (from Bergson), a point where body and world are open to one another, not yet distinct” (Morris 2004: 109). As discussed earlier, Merleau-Ponty’s concept of flesh provides this point which precedes the bifurcation between subject and object. As Trigg (2008: 557) writes, “Before positivism places the world ‘here’ and the subject ‘there’, the visible world itself is brought to appearances through the emergence of flesh, which serves to challenge the ego-based notion of intentionality as being an insular and inner world”. Trigg reads Merleau-Ponty’s later work as a revision of the Husserlian notion of intentionality in the sense that, rather than consciousness bringing the world into reality, “this consciousness-object relation is to be displaced through attending to a state of ‘wild being’” (2008: 557). Trigg proposes that ‘flesh’, is a point at which world and body are open to each other, normative positions and demarcations are disrupted. Such disruptions, according to Trigg, “obligate us in true phenomenological fashion, to see the world anew, unencumbered by prejudice”.

This notion of ‘wild being’ should be used with caution. It does not refer to pure perception. In *the Visible and Invisible*, Merleau-Ponty (1968: 115) states explicitly that “[w]e never have before us pure individuals, indivisible glaciers of beings, nor essences without place and without date”. Merleau-Ponty (1968: 117) uses ‘wild being’ to contrast with abstract philosophical thought that searches for facts and essences:

This environment of brute existence and essence is not something mysterious: we never quit it, we have no other environment. The facts and the essences are abstractions: what there is are worlds and a world and a Being, not a sum of facts or a system of ideas.

With ‘wild being’, Merleau-Ponty wanted to emphasise that it is in brute existence that we must look for understanding, within the reversibility of our very lives that we live as “sensible-sentients” (1968: 116), which compels us to question of others their perceptions, which we can never access directly or understand fully. The reversibility of flesh, or *chiasm*, is a passing into the other of myself and of myself into the other” (Landes, 2010: 293), which happens through a questioning of the view behind the other’s eyes. For this questioning and answering we need communication, be it verbal or bodily or visual. In ‘wild being’ – the active/passive

reversible relation of flesh – we are able to experience surprises and apprehend anew and therefore are compelled to continue to question and communicate.

As an extension of the eye, the camera has been enlisted in the project of showing others (and ourselves) what we see and have seen. But, of course, the way photographs record the optically projected image onto film is not nearly the same as the human visual system. From the flat rectangular surface of the film to the way colours, tonal values, and shapes are translated, no aspect of the photograph is the same as how we actually see. With the understanding of my embodied relation with the camera, rather than Cartier-Bresson's (1958) proclamation of "Ah! I've seen this. I've been there. I've seen that", I should rather say, "Look, this is how I saw this and that with this camera."

Bannon's (2011) reframing of Merleau-Ponty's *flesh* as an ontological rather than a perceptual structure extends its reversibility to non-humans and even technological objects such as the camera system I worked with in Morgenster. The early morning *guti* that I encountered while photographing in Morgenster disrupted my immediate experience of space. Where I expected a sunrise of soft

pastel, glowing sky outlining the shapes of the surrounding buildings, and rocks and trees in specific distances, I saw indistinct grey-muffled shapes in a field where perceptual space faded out twenty paces away. Yet, if I walked closer, almost surprisingly, familiar buildings and objects did appear where I remembered them to be. Familiar and unfamiliar shapes were changed as they stood out against the 'ganzfeld'-like background or faded into it. Muffled sounds came to us, apparently only from what was visible, as if the world came into being only in my field of sensory perception as I moved around.

The air (Gibson's medium that affords movement and vision) became almost liquid. It lay on the earth, as only a cloud can. Fine droplets whirled around in the wind and covered everything, including the photographic equipment. The lens became something to look at and through, with fine droplets covering it, no matter how we tried to keep the equipment dry. In this way my equipment became visible, without actually failing and fully becoming 'present at hand' or un-ready-to-hand instead of 'ready-at-hand', in Heidegger's terms. The weather conditions lit up the reversibility of affect in that the camera was affected by the mist in how it rendered the projected image.

This mediated, or infolded, unexpected experience caused a revision in my way of looking at and thinking about spatial relationships between objects in the environment as well as the 'medium' through which this can be perceived: the camera and the air. My everyday experience of air, to name but one example, has been disrupted by the contact of my body-camera and a place in that I now experience air not as invisible space, but as more or less transparent medium that significantly affects my sense of space and experience of place.

My experience in Morgenster was characterised by the full range of possibilities within the enactive model of sense-making sketched in Section 2.2.1 by Voros *et al.* (2016: 199), possibly veering closer to imagination and even dreaming in some cases. In this section I have inserted the camera into this entanglement of active-passive perception and imagination. In becoming part of the flesh of being, the camera is shown to shape both perception and imagination, as the way that it renders images is also shaped by the place itself and my perceptive and imaginative relation to it. Because photographs can record images produced thus, they can become part of the

questioning of the other and the self towards a making-sense-of place.

When Merleau-Ponty (1964, as cited by Landes, 2010: 295) states that "[e]verywhere there are meanings, dimensions, and forms in excess of what each 'consciousness' could have produced; and yet it is men who speak and think and see. We are in the field of history as we are in the field of language or existence", I might add that it is human kind and their tools who speak and think and see.



Figure 22: 28 mm f2.8 Minolta lens with *guti*, 2016.



Figure 23: *Guti* over granite hills.

### 3.1.7 Conclusion

In my exploration of Morgenster, with my father's old camera and slide film, the inexhaustible complexity and many layers of place shaped by time and a clash of cultures become apparent. I start from a relatively harmonious perspective of being-in-place as dwelling, but this is soon complicated by the photographic technology that mediates my experience.

The dwelling perspective comes across as somewhat romantic and naïve in the light of the praxis and politics of landscape photography. A focus on vulnerability as the mood shaping an encounter with a place, instils an openness to being shaped for better or for worse, pleasant and unpleasant. The degree to which this vulnerability is a choice, is not fixed and will vary between individual entities but will also be formed by culture. In one sense, one must always choose: the only choice one does not have is not to choose, according to Sartre. Once the choice is made for vulnerability and openness, one relinquishes control and the ability to choose. Malpas's understanding of dwelling (which is a re-interpretation of Heidegger's notion) allows for such individual and collective systems

of sense-making in that he holds that dwelling means different things in different places.

Considering the manifold of appearances of Morgenster, I explore my individual system of sense-making in relation to cultural influences and mediating factors. I use photographic images to refer to specific moments of the appearances of places. Such moments are abstracted in photographs as much as in written language, yet maintain contact with things. Rather than a severance of contact with things, there is a struggle between expression and experience. One example of such a struggle is found in naming and mapping practices that are culturally specific, yet there are overlaps even in such diverse cultures as the Karanga and the Afrikaans missionaries, who both display a lived spiritual understanding of their environment. The photographs are of course only able to refer to place names by virtue of the captions and titles.

The mediating presence of the camera highlights tensions between masculine and feminine ways of looking, coupled with tensions between African and European ways of looking, yet an embodied sense of space prevails in spite of the politics of past and present onlookers. Even so, the embodied perspective is no less political in

its situatedness. The camera as a physical object brings with it a history of embodied praxis. As Ihde (2009: 33) emphasised, technologies have embodied use contexts that are culture specific; shaped by its histories of use.

With this understanding I explore self-camera-place relations, focusing on the nature of the agency of the specific camera as technological object. In this specific triad, the optical image and imagined latent image produced by the camera are important role players in the mediation of my experience and perception. These aspects highlight additional modes of intending at work in perception with a camera, namely picturing and symbolising. In these modes, imagination works together with bodily perception to shape experiences of a place. The internalisation of the optical image focused into the camera viewfinder suggests that what Ihde calls mediation is more accurately described as an action of *infoling* of the technological object into the experience.

Terms such as 'embodied relations' and 'infoling' serve to naturalise the technology. While there is a sense in which this is desirable, it also holds the danger of reverting back to a naïve trust in the photographic image as objective truth. In this discussion the dual

action of augmentation and transformation of human vision is highlighted with emphasis on the dissimilarities between human vision with and without photographic technology.

The naturalisation of the technology, however, is consistent with the postphenomenological project of dissolving artificial splitting of subject/object, nature/culture, and natural/technological. Allowing the technological object to participate in the flesh of the world both as part of the self-camera-world triad and independently of human involvement, potentially allows photography to participate in Heidegger's 'saving power' promised by art. In this way, photography does not automatically participate in modern technology's project of ordering forth the world as standing aesthetic reserve. Instead of reading photographic looking as singular and static, it can be read as providing multiple situated perspectives that embrace the manifold appearances of the given, allowing an aletheic revealing instead of the *assertoric* image of the world that it is often accused of providing.

Even so, it must be remembered that, just as Heidegger stated, a return to pre-technological dwelling is both impossible and undesirable and so is pre-technological seeing. This present project

therefore does not aspire to a reclaiming of an 'innocent eye' or any notion of pure perception. I would rather endeavour to understand the nature of the corruption. Human-technological expression is inherently corrupted, but not finally corrupt. It is constantly corrupted anew in wonderful ways and the camera is a co-conspirator, together with the 'Earth', concealing more than what is revealed.

## 3.2 Mochudi and Nietverdiend

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In the discussion of Morgenster, self-technology-place relations emerge as embodied infoldings that embrace the push and pull of active/passive perception. This infolded relation transpires as a strife between, among other things, the historical and cultural modes of engagement with places and environments, with and without photography. In this strife, however, technology is not pitted against nature or against the human. Rather, technology is an intricate aspect of how nature and the earth is revealed and co-creates a world, which allows humans to be; to exist. In the previous section, I asked whether I could operate outside of the traditional 'landscape way of seeing', and found that I could, by interrogating and delving into the particular relations forged between self, camera, and place.

In relating the process of photographing Mochudi and Nietverdiend in what follows, I reconsider the self-technology-place triad with a slight shift of perspective to consider how being is always a being-with, both in the sense of being alongside, and in the sense of that which facilitates being. I start this discussion by considering being-with a place of my childhood, alongside Morris's and Trigg's respective thoughts on the temporal aspects of embodied

emplacement, as well as Edward Casey's import of Pierre Bourdieu's notion of habitus into a discussion of place. Against the background of, and in contrast with Gaston Bachelard's poetic phenomenology of his childhood home, I rethink my understanding of dwelling between Mochudi and Nietverdiend as places mediated by the camera in which memory plays a significant role.

Upon returning to this place of my childhood, I encounter it with a camera. I therefore proceed to examine my choice of photographic system and how it facilitates and translates my being-with these places. I shift the focus of the discussion to the hermeneutic function of this photographic technology which leads me to consider how I am with this place (the people and their engagement with the environment), with a camera. I examine in this discussion what happens in this human-technology-place assemblage and how the act of photographing relates to Rose's conception of dwelling as a continual, immaterial, and transient marking and claiming, but also as the dislocating tension between self and land as explored by Wylie (2012). In this section I aim to build on "Ihde's more nuanced picture of the hermeneutical role of technologies" (Verbeek, 2010: 143) by considering my photographic practice within a specific

context, in relation to a particular photographic system (the digital mirrorless camera with its live-view, instant feedback options, and the manipulability of the image pixels) “and the praxes and interpretations that are made possible by it” (Verbeek, 2010:143).

For this section, the work of notable historians of the Bakgatla people and Mochudi, namely Isaac Schapera and later Elinah and Sandy Grant, who built on the work done by Schapera, is of great use in understanding the specific context I encounter in Mochudi. Both these texts provide information and insights into the place and the people of which I was only vaguely aware, if at all, while living there as a child.

### 3.2.1 Both sides of the border

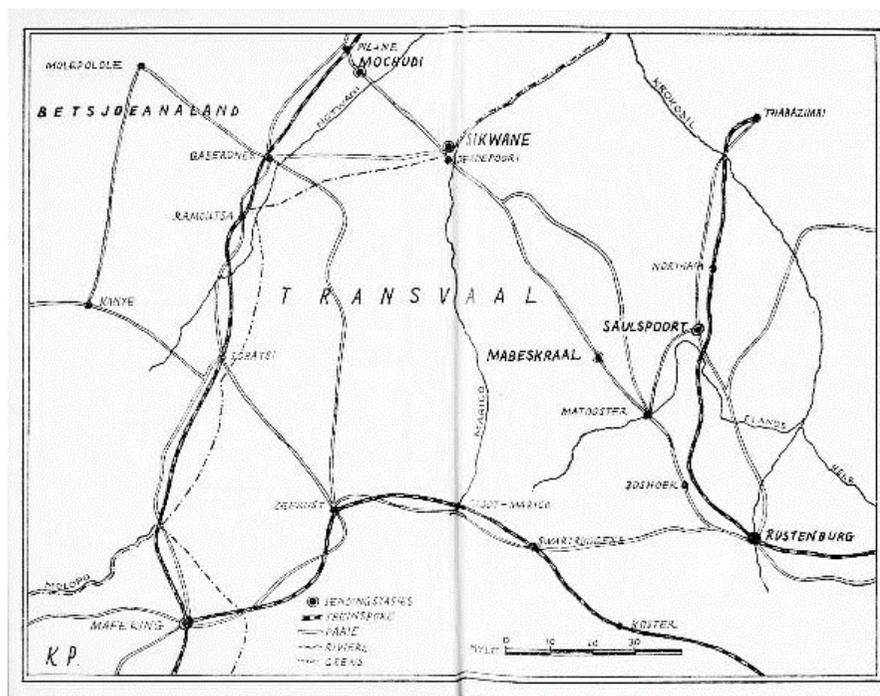


Figure 24: Map of Dutch Reformed Mission stations including Mochudi in the north, in Botswana (then Betshoeanaland).

When the Dutch Reformed Mission withdrew all the missionaries from Morgenster due to the threat of war, my father was redeployed to a mission hospital in Mochudi, Botswana, about an hour's drive from the South African border. Mochudi is a sprawling village of

some political significance as it is the ancestral seat of the paramount Chief Kgamanyane, who led a part of the Bakgatla-bakgafela (henceforth Bakgatla) tribe across the Crocodile River in order to escape the oppressive rule of the 'Boers' under Paul Kruger, in 1869 (Schapera, 1942: 10). The Bakgatla have since had tribal headquarters in both Mochudi and in Moruleng (Saulspoot).

The rocky hillocks of the area that became Mochudi provided sufficient defence and shelter for the Bakgatla to settle in spite of the arid climate and repeated clashes with the Bakwena tribe with whom the Bakgatla has a troubled history and long-standing land ownership disputes (Schapera, 1942: 12). The bigger part of the tribe remained in the Saulspoot area, under Tshomankane, half-brother of Kgamanyane, and currently occupy and have authority over much of the Bojanala Platinum District (Bojanala Platinum District Municipality [BPDM], 2012: 94).

Cross-border relations between the two sections of the Bakgafela have been varied and often strained, and complicated by pass laws instated under apartheid (Pörsel, 2014: 261). The Bakgatla remained an independent people at heart, even under the British Protectorate, which spanned from 1884 until Botswana obtained independence in

1966. Kgosi Kgafela II, the first son of Kgosi Linchwe II, succeeded his father in 2008 but was derecognised as chief in Mochudi due to being criminally charged for continuing with the practice of public floggings, which are currently illegal in Botswana. Kgafela relocated to Moruleng in 2011 (Pörsel, 2014: 258), leaving a leadership vacuum, filled to some extent by the brothers of Linchwe II.

I lived with my family in Mochudi for about six years in total, from age two until age 11, with about 18 months spent in England in between. Unfortunately, I never learned to speak Setswana fluently because we (myself and two brothers) were sent to boarding school just across the border in Nietverdiend and only spent some weekends at home. The school provided basic education to the local farmers' children and had less than 80 learners in total.

Mochudi played an important role in the history of the South African struggle against apartheid, in that fugitives from the South African Defence Force (SADF) and South African Police (SAP) were concealed and aided by Chief Linchwe II (Cantwell, 2015: 258-261).

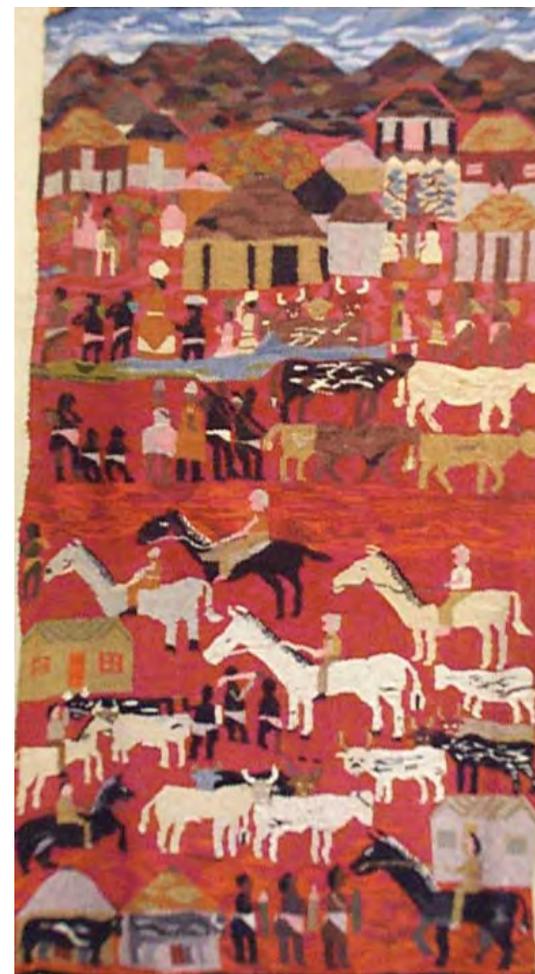


Figure 25: n.d. Oodi Weavers. Woven wall hanging depicting interaction between the Bakgatla and early British settlers, courtesy of Phuthadikobo.

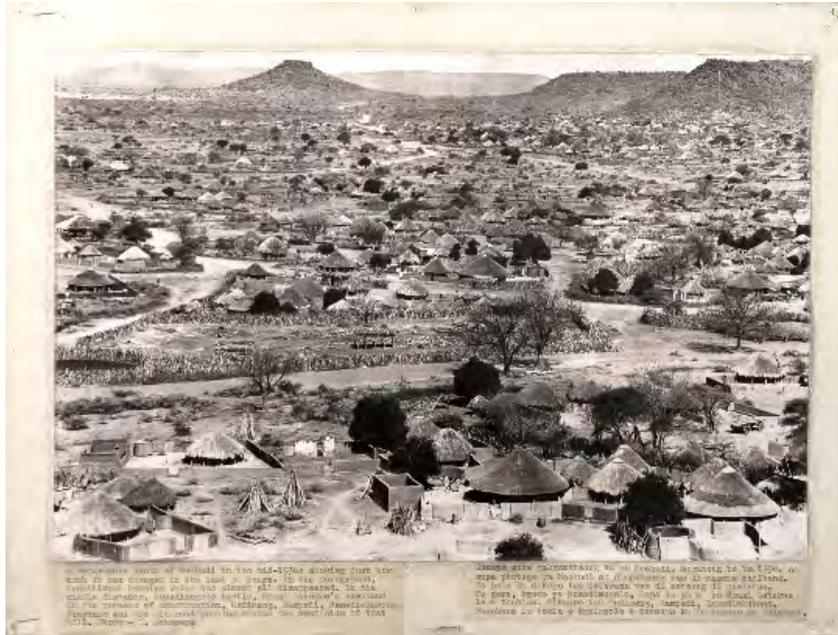


Figure 26: Mid-1930s. I Schapera. Looking down from Phuthadikobo towards Phaphane, as displayed in Phuthadikobo Museum, reproduced with permission of Phuthadikobo Museum, 2016.



Figure 27: June 2014. Looking down from Phuthadikobo towards Phaphane.

The Bakgatla also “secretly kept and distributed weapons that enabled African National Congress (ANC) military action in South Africa”, according to Christine Pörsel (2014: 261). The 1985 car bomb that was detonated in a vehicle parked next to the newly built nursing homes, (killing four people, two children and two adults, and injuring many) was possibly connected to Linchwe II’s support of the ANC. The bombing was, however, never fully investigated, and it is still unsure whether the bomb was planted by the South African government or not (Arnold, 2016: 207). No official statement was issued by either government.

In spite of the political situation (of which I was unaware as a child), Mochudi was my childhood paradise. Here I experienced a freedom that contrasted starkly with the rigid and confined atmosphere of Nietverdiend that was under military protection due to the proximity with the Botswana border. Sometimes we would be transported from Nietverdiend to the Botswana border in ‘Kaspers’ for our protection. During the early 1980s, tensions between the governments of Botswana and South Africa ran high due to the persecution/protection of ANC activists, with the added complication that the borders of Bophuthatswana were being

renegotiated at the time, with the land around Nietverdiend being under dispute. With this relatively new knowledge of the histories of the two places, I returned to Nietverdiend and more so Mochudi as a place of fond memories gained in ignorance.



Figure 28: A. de Klerk. 2014, Laerskool Nietverdiend.

### 3.2.2 The home of my childhood

... any given place is never autonomous in its unity, but forever bleeding and seeping into other places, both those of the past and those of the future (Trigg, 2012: 17).

Place and self are implicated in each other. Casey (2001: 409) makes this claim more specific and less abstract by referring to lived-place and the geographical self<sup>55</sup>. Casey then goes on to ask the question of how lived-place and geographical self are co-shaped, what ties them together, and how does this co-shaping and co-constitution happen? This issue is later also addressed by Morris and Trigg respectively, all of whom start their discussions from the basis of Merleau-Ponty's notions of bodily intentionality and the habitual body. Creswell (2009: 7) summarises this notion of the habitual body as an understanding that being-in-the-world is not a mental being, but an embodied subject whose body develops a knowing of activities and movement in place that conscious thought tends to interfere with.

Casey, however, turns to Bourdieu's term of 'habitus' as formulated in his *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1977). While habit has the connotation of dulling perception in that one performs habitual tasks without noticing or paying particular attention, habitus, by contrast, provides a structure and regularity in our experiences of places that facilitate innovation and variation. It is because of the continuity of structures and things in the world, as well as our experiences thereof, that we can act upon these and also notice differences when they occur (Casey, 2001: 410).

The actual space in which such bodily knowing is shaped is both physical and social. We learn from others how to move, and also encounter in this process others' sense of space that includes us. As Morris (2004: 100) writes,

a body that needs to learn to move from others is a body that is operating as a bodily 'I' that is 'We,' and a body of this sort depends on a bodily 'We' that is 'I,' a social body that helps – and thus also possibly

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<sup>55</sup> With the geographical self, Casey (2001c: 683) refers to "the human subject who is oriented and situated in place".

hinders and does violence to – the movement and growth of individual bodies.

Our being-in-the-world is shaped *with* places, which incorporate people, things, and spaces, as well as temporality. Through repeated actions that we learn, bodily habits of movement and action, rest and passivity, form through interactions, or as Morris would call it, crossings of body and world. This openness brings about constant revisions, almost as if in habit formation, actions, or ways of moving and doing, are frozen and thawed and frozen again upon repetition. Morris provides the example of returning to a childhood home only to find that the steps leading to the porch have been changed. He climbs the stairs of habit rather than the stairs of present experience, only to jolt his back in stepping for a no-longer existent step. Morris (2004: 93) thus writes that “the forging of meaning is not reduced to the present, but retains its past, retains its momentum toward the future, and comes alive in the present when habits thaw and reform”. Prolonged movement in a specific place, rather than through a place, shapes our sense of space and our physical bodies in their habitudes. A place that we inhabit thus directs our movement, even as we shape

the place around us. Casey (2001a: 412) explains this active, embodied inhabitation of place in the following passage:

“When I inhabit a place – whether by moving through it or staying in it – I have it in my actional purview. I also hold it by virtue of being in its ambiance: first in my body as it holds on to the place by various sensory and kinesthetic means, then in my memory as I hold it in mind – a mind, moreover, that includes such nonmentalistic things as language, body memory, and habitudes themselves.”

Memories of a place therefore manifest in the way that I move, or my style of movement; my embodied interactions or crossings with present places. Bachelard (2014: 2) expresses similar insights in his *Poetics of Space*, initially published in 1954, which remains an inspiration for contemporary thought on phenomenology of place, and many other disciplines. He declares, for instance, that we carry the places that we lived in with us. Through daydreams and memories we are able to carry the treasures of past homes with us (Bachelard, 2014: 31),

but over and beyond our memories, the house we were born<sup>56</sup> in is physically inscribed in us. It is a group of organic habits. After twenty years, in spite of all the other anonymous stairways, we would recapture the reflexes of the 'first stairway,' we would not stumble on that rather high step (Bachelard, 2014: 35).

Indeed, after an absence of 20 years, upon returning to my childhood home, I knew the stairs leading up to the house perfectly, even though my legs did not have to stretch with every step anymore. Unlike Bachelard, however, I do not remember the house itself with such fondness and intimacy as he remembers his childhood home. Instead, the garden and surrounding area, even beyond the yard, are physically inscribed in me. Bachelard's image of daydreaming in the garret, nooks, and crannies of a house, does not resonate with my direct experience. Rather, my places for daydreaming were outside: at the bottom of the garden in the dark shadows of the old Marula tree; in the crotch of the Marula tree closer to the house, which was less dark and less likely to harbour a

boomslang; on the curved wall leading up to the porch; on the flat boulders a short distance from the kitchen.

It is perhaps the warm climate that drives this intimacy outside the house. Bachelard's image is born out of his own childhood home in the cold clime of Champagne. The shadowy bottom of the garden of my childhood memories 'reverberate' to some extent with Bachelard's cellar, but then turns into my own where dark shapes moved and irrational dreams grew, as the tree and shade plants also grew vigorously here. In Bachelard's imagery, "[the cellar] is first and foremost the dark entity of the house, the one that partakes of the subterranean forces. When we dream there, we are in harmony with the irrationality of the depths" (Bachelard, 2014: 36). At night, however, the cellar creatures reached up into my room as the branches of the old Marula tree would cast moving shadows on my bedroom wall – grotesque shapes; grabbing tentacles and snapping beaks. The 'cellar' of my childhood home was outside but reached into the safety of my intimate room.

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<sup>56</sup> I read this statement of "the house we were born in" as a poetic image referring to the place or places where our idea of self was initially formed.



Figure 29: A. de Klerk, 2016, Stairs leading to the front door of my childhood home in Mochudi.

The shadows that I photographed on the outside walls, just outside my old room, reminded me of the fearful fascination I experienced, lying in my bed, fighting irrational fears but yet mesmerised by the continually changing figures cast on my bedroom wall.

My seat up in my tree, again, could correspond to Bachelard's attic of rational daydreams. "Up near the roof," he writes, "all our thoughts are clear. In the attic it is a pleasure to see the bare rafters



Figure 30: A. de Klerk, 2016, The old Marula tree in the bottom of the garden.

of the strong framework. Here we participate in the carpenter's solid geometry" (Bachelard, 2014: 36). In the tree where I read many books and dreamt more open dreams, I participated in the Marula tree's solid but organic and growing geometry swaying with my movement and that of the wind; the feel of the rough bark on my feet and through my clothes. Where Bachelard's places of reverie that inform his poetics of space and his topoanalysis are inside his

house, the corresponding places of my childhood home are outside.

The house itself of my childhood

home was nothing if not placed on that hill, in that outside environment,<sup>57</sup> with those surroundings, shaped by the Bakgatla-bakgafela and the local politics; the missionaries; the Boer and British colonisers;<sup>58</sup> the natural forces of earth and sky. It is therefore the surrounding environment – with the old house in it – that I consider as the home of my childhood. Bachelard (2014: 44) writes that “we must lose our earthly Paradise in order actually to live in it, to experience it in the reality of its images”. According to Trigg’s (2012) phenomenology of nostalgia, we are drawn back to places that formed us, in order to somehow reassure ourselves that our memories and reveries have some basis in experience. Such memories of a place are, however, different from memories of events. The place represents repeated events, and non-events, so to speak. Here and there a specific event might be more salient than

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<sup>57</sup> Southern Botswana is classified a semi-arid climate.

<sup>58</sup> In Mochudi, external influence came primarily from the Bakwena and the Basarwa who occupied the area before the Bagkatla moved across the Crocodile River, as well as from Boer and British territorial expansion in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

another, but the memory of place occupies a thick space in memory, rather than a static two-dimensional image such as a photograph, although photographs often contribute greatly to the structure of that space (McTighe, 2012: 2). Sokolowski (2000) cautions that memory should not be confused with picturing. Rather than ‘calling up an image’ of an object or place, remembering is more like experiencing the object directly – in its absence (Sokolowski, 2000: 67). In order to remember, I therefore have to displace myself into the past and “a distinction arises between me here and now [...] and me there and then” (Sokolowski, 2000: 67).

I will not attempt to describe these places of my childhood daydreaming in any detail, because as Bachelard (2014: 34) rightly observed, in attempting to describe such intimate places, “[t]he values of intimacy are so absorbing that the reader has ceased to read your room: he sees his own”. Instead I provide photographs of some of these places, but these remain anonymous and strange to

The mission stations (Dutch Reformed and Lutheran respectively) established in the early 1900s also exerted a major influence. In 1885, the Bechuanaland Protectorate was established and became a High Commission Territory in 1891 (Pörsel, 2014: 251).

the reader, and to myself, because the visual cannot communicate memories. While these images attest to the coincidence of myself and the place with my camera at that moment, they simultaneously attest to the absence of the physical place and all the moments I hold in my memory; those not photographed.

Standing in front of the old house, I displace myself to another time, in the same place. This does not involve the calling up of still, motionless images. As my displaced self, I feel again what it felt like to be small and the effort it took to climb the high steps and how I had to stretch and scramble for the first branches of the tree; how I could lose myself in the shadows of the overgrown garden. Trigg (2012: 17), with reference to Merleau-Ponty's analysis of the phantom limb,<sup>59</sup> states that we re-enact the past through our bodies. Trigg goes on to stress the importance of the relation between memory and re-enactment in that "it not only renders the body the centre of experience, but also implicates the body's retrieval of the

past as being deeply emblematic of the specificity of the self, giving the self a temporal density that would be ultimately fragmented were memory a solely cognitive affair" (Trigg, 2012: 17).

The tree I used to sit in as a child has since grown much bigger, and so have I. The act of photographing the places I remember emphasises that places, even what we think of as 'our' places, continue their becoming independently of our own. The presence of the old dying tree accentuates the absence of the fully grown healthy tree; the presence of the nursing hostels accentuates the absence of the tennis court. The digitised image I can see on the viewing screen of the camera emphasises this absence and "draws our attention to the facticity of those things in the first place" (Trigg, 2012: 25).

Trigg (2012: 176) describes nostalgia with reference to Bachelard's *Poetics of Space*: "As with Bachelard's murky, shadowy first house, the object of nostalgia covertly protrudes into the present, refusing all specificity of a set time and so allowing the imagination to clothe

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<sup>59</sup> In *The Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty provided an extensive analysis of the phenomenon experienced by patients who have lost a limb that the limb is still part of their bodies. Merleau-Ponty concludes that this phenomenon shows that our being-in-the-world is pre-objective, and that "to

have a phantom arm is to remain open to all the actions of which the arm alone is capable; it is to retain the practical field which one enjoyed before mutilation" (Merleau-Ponty, 1962).

the object in an idealised light". In returning to such a place as one's childhood home, this "idealised light" is punctured by the traces of the passage of time, and the fact that the place has continued on without us. In this disruption the unity of the self that was shaped by this place is also disrupted. We find a strangeness in the familiarity. We find evidence that we do not know the place as well as we thought. Hidden mysteries always remain as unthinkable and invisible. In this process the unity of self-identity becomes vulnerable.

My experience during my second visit to Nietverdiend and Mochudi confirmed Trigg's assessment quoted above. My mood changed from nostalgic reverie and harmonious unity in being here, making new acquaintances and seeing older ones again, to a feeling of disjuncture, disruptions, and unfamiliarity with the place and its politics. I felt strange in a strange place that was at the same time familiar. Besides the passing of time evident in the decay of buildings and the growth of trees, and the continuity of the place without me, what disrupted my sense of place was my greater, less naïve understanding of the social structures that, among other things, shaped this part of the village. The continual need for me to explain

to passers-by my purposes in photographing their village, caused me to doubt and question my purposes. But I will return to this later.

The strangeness that Trigg refers to, is also born from studying things too intently for too long, as one tends to do when photographing. It is a similar effect to what happens when saying a word over and over until the once very familiar sounds become nonsensical. Perhaps the repetitions strip the word from its context so thoroughly that we hear the word as if it is another language made up of sounds with no meaning. By studying the various aspects of this strange and familiar place directly with my own eyes; on the viewing screen; photographing it and then afterwards inspecting the moments captured at length did the same to Mochudi for me.

Trigg seems to suggest that human experience layers-over and obscures aspects of the world, and thus produces the unthinkable and unnameable that lurks always just out of reach of human perception and understanding. Phenomenological description is then employed to cut through or dissect the unnameable and strange. It is not uncommon for writers on place to employ

photography in such phenomenological descriptions.<sup>60</sup> Trigg (2012: 9), for example, uses photographs in *The Memory of Place* (2012) in aid of description, but even more so because of how photographs, according to him, make the familiar strange. By capturing that which escapes human attention at first glance<sup>61</sup>, the photographic image allows us to view at leisure and review again what we unconsciously captured. In cooperation with the camera we can therefore obtain a more incisive view of the world; of what is given. Walter Benjamin (2008: 30), however, likens photographic images to the action of the scalpel of the surgeon who invades the body, without first acknowledging the patient.

At the same time, however, phenomenological description, for Trigg, is more than just mimetic representation. Photography simultaneously offers mere reflections of surfaces, and the strangeness of the world, by virtue of repetition and prolonging of moments. Photographs are strange in their stillness and pointing to things that are always already past – the “that-has-been” (Barthes

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<sup>60</sup> See the work of Wylie (2005; 2009), Tilley (1994), and Alex Zukas (2009) for some examples of the use of photographs in phenomenological landscape writing.

1993: 76), yet “the present discovers itself within the past, and the past is realized within the present” according to Kaja Silverman (2015: 7). Photographs of a place are strange in the way they can show a place fixed in time but yet the past and future are suggested.

Experiencing a place from one’s past is decidedly uncanny because one experiences the simultaneous displacement and emplacement of self in remembering and perceiving the same place, especially if a significant stretch of time has passed since a previous encounter. Standing in front of our old home, I am simultaneously small and fully grown; a child and an adult. This doubling of experience results in a questioning of the unity of my conscious self and body, mind and body. If memory occurs in the mind and perception occurs in the body, this questioning would result in irreparable fracture. The earlier discussion on memory of place as situated in mind and body, or rather the embodied self, however, denies such total fragmentation. The unity of mind and body is rather disrupted than fragmented in the experience of stepping up this stairwell, my body

<sup>61</sup> Benjamin (1972: 7) refers to this phenomenon as the “optical unconscious”.

expects a greater stretch, but does not stumble, because in growing up my body has already made the adaptation. I feel the stretch without having to perform it.<sup>62</sup>

This discussion started out with an account of how place shapes the self, both physically in the form of bodily habituation, and in memories that develop into poetic spaces of reverie over time. Upon return to such places, however, the imagined unified self is doubled and fundamentally questioned, if not fractured. Even though such an experience could be traumatic, it is far from merely negative or even destructive. In the process of experiencing a place anew, new experiences become new memories that shape anew, in terms of the fragments and the new perspectives gained. Taking photographs during this kind of encounter has highly ambiguous effects: The images are both still and animating. They are anonymous in that they do not give any indication of specific time and place but yet they are highly specific in that they create images of *this tree, this sky, this space*. They are literal descriptions but yet strange because of the

excessive detail described (which includes the technological system). The resultant photographs do not reproduce my displaced body that I feel so acutely, yet they also do not reproduce 'reality' in the sense that Mountain (2010: 46) used the word when she stated that, "as reality becomes more and more questionable, so increases the need to desperately hold onto some sense of it through things like photographs".

The photographs dissect the memory and imagination from this place. Just below the house, beyond the garden, there used to be a tennis court. Now this space is occupied by a nursing college. While on the court with my parents and brothers, on 17 November 1985, we heard what we at first thought was thunder, but looking up, saw no clouds, except the growing mushroom shape of the explosion (see Figure 31 and Figure 32), about 200 metres away. There is no trace left of this event. Any photograph of this space therefore is incongruous with my memory of the place.

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<sup>62</sup> I know the difference between now and then, unlike the android 'hosts' in Johnathan Nolan and Lisa Joy's (2016) series remake of *Westworld*, who, in

remembering, feel themselves so thoroughly displaced that neither they nor the viewer can tell the difference. Yes, a fun reference.

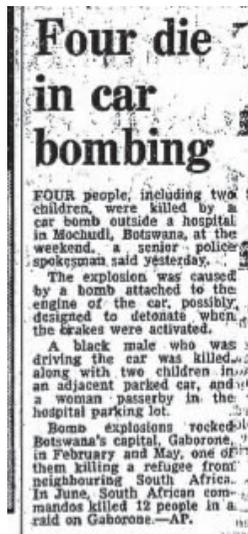
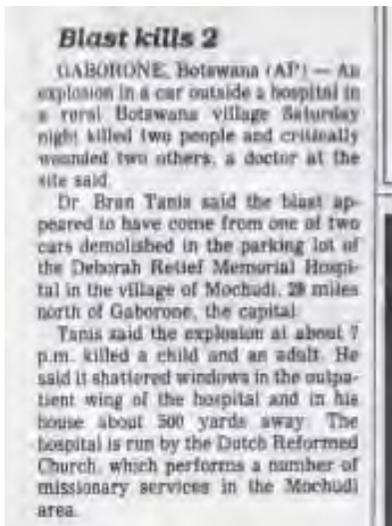


Figure 31: Newspaper clippings from international newspapers, 17 and 18 November 1985.



Figure 32: 2015, the Nursing College where the old tennis court used to be.

Trigg (2012) agrees with Bachelard that phenomenological description must be executed through experience. "Objectivity thus stands in a peculiar relation to subjectivity, whereby subjective experience becomes the 'clearing' (to use a Heideggerian term) for the disclosure of appearances". In the following section I consider how the act of photographing aids, and/or hinders such description.

### 3.2.3 Being with this camera, with this place

In *Nietverdiend* and *Mochudi* I worked with a mirrorless digital camera retro-fashioned after traditional rangefinder models. The main significant differences between this system and a digital single-lens reflex (DSLR) camera is that the viewfinder is a separate optical system from the image capture optics. This means that there is no interruption of the image when the shutter release is pressed. Also, with this specific model, the viewfinder is electronic, and offers a markedly inferior image as compared to what an optical viewfinder would provide. The digital viewing screen, however, has an excellent-quality live-view function which I prefer over the viewfinder. The effect of this on my bodily practice is that I do not hold the camera against my eye, covering my face. Instead of holding the camera by hand, away from my face, which would be much less stable, I rather use it on a tripod, and use the viewing screen as if it was a ground glass of a larger-format camera. Unlike a large-format camera, however, this system is highly compact, and can be

supported by a small tripod. The very same basic technology of image formation that makes analogue photography possible, is thus employed in a drastically different form (from the system used in *Morgenster*), in combination with a digital sensor rather than film.

This photographic system and the way that I work with it, allow me to view not only the image before I press the shutter release, but also during and directly after. This means that once the shutter release is pressed, my memory of the moments captured and imagining of what the result will be can immediately be compared with the captured image on the screen. This allows for the possibility that elements that would possibly have remained part of the optical unconscious can now become part of the conscious assessment of the image. While the screen is too small to show every detail, it does have a zoom function that allows more detailed inspection. This reviewing of the image in the very place and approximate time that it was taken,<sup>63</sup> is often described by photographers as a distraction

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<sup>63</sup> This habit of looking at the captured image (and showing it to others) immediately after pressing the shutter release is derisively called 'chimping' after the 'ooh, ooh, ooh' that often accompanies this process.

from the scene photographed. It is very likely that while reviewing images, one might miss an event, or miss the way light changes.

With this way of working, the camera's mediating role becomes increasingly hermeneutic rather than embodied. Instead of using the camera to look at the world, the camera itself becomes the object of attention through which the world is interpreted, rather than an augmentation of perception. One could argue that this way of working would have the result that the world is read from the small screen of the camera as a series of manageable moments, contained in the memory card. It would shape the relation with the world as one of being possessed and controlled through technological means.

In my practice of photographing landscape, however, I use the option to review images sparingly. On a practical level it removes a level of uncertainty. It allows me, for instance, to check precisely how much movement is captured in a frame. For my purposes, I needed motion to be captured in the middle of the frame, not touching the edges, in order to later be able to combine the frame with other frames. On a phenomenological level, the camera's hermeneutic function is not merely one-sided. As mentioned previously, the

concept of infolding is more apt than mediation. The camera with its playback function on the viewing screen, has options within limitations. Through the instant feedback, my decisions and actions interact with how the camera allows me to interpret my experience of place. One could perhaps argue that the experienced photographer who knows her tool does not need to see the image on the screen to know what the feedback on the screen will look like. The viewing screen is furthermore very limited and can in some cases give a false impression. Using the zoom function to enlarge detail still does not provide an accurate account of what a large print would look like. The dynamics of a small screen are very different from a large print (more will be said about this in Phase 2).

My aim in photographing Nietverdiend and Mochudi is to describe the place as I hold it in my memory, suspended in motion, but at the same time I want to respond to the here and now experience of the place. As mentioned earlier, photography as descriptive medium is ambiguous in that it simultaneously describes more and less than what I perceive. My actual experience of photographing this place is, however, characterised by the sense of a doubled self, as explained earlier.



Figure 33: A. de Klerk, 2016, Experimentation with movement.

The place as suspended in my childhood memory, together with myself then, and the place here and now, constantly confront each other. I use the playback option on the viewing screen mostly for technical purposes. I would go out walking an hour or so before my estimate of when the light would be optimal for a specific area, and then start photographing and reviewing the images in order to decide finally where to stand, what angle of approach and view to

take, and what shutter speed to use. Reviewing the images at this point in the process allows me to reposition myself in relation to my direct perceptions and anticipation as interpreted through the camera, upon which I can then change some settings, thus also changing the camera interpretation. The experience is a circular infolding between self, camera, and place.

In the evenings, upon returning to my rented room, I would carefully go through every frame I took on the bigger screen of my computer. In this way of working, the image manipulation software and the computer that facilitates this manipulation should be seen as a continuation of the manipulation and enhancement processes that start in the capturing device – an extension of the photographic technology, rather than separate technologies. On this screen it is possible to inspect every detail of what is potentially successful. I would then also combine several frames with Photoshop's Photomerge tool, to create a rough impression of what I have in mind. In this process I relive the photographing process and take note of how to adapt the next day. In some cases, I would then go back to photograph the same place several times. In other cases, I would be satisfied with the first attempt. I generally refrain from

cropping out the resultant untidy edges at this stage, because this process already moves too close to final representation, which will be discussed in Phase 2.

The combinations of moments that are possible with the digital image manipulation technology offer a way to create a record of sorts of a span of time, which I can experience in memory but not in direct experience without the aid of the camera and digital technologies. With this technology I am able to spatially arrange elements of moments separated in time, sometimes by seconds, and in some cases by minutes. This interpretation of the environment can now inform how I look at and experience the place directly. In this process my photographic practice is coming to resemble more and more the way visual experience of a place is built up from glances. Casey (2001: 11) expounded on the significance of the glance in the understanding of place when he wrote that

Ort, the German word for 'place,' derives ultimately from 'tip of a spear': the glance, like a lance, is typically thrown at its target (as the French say, when

we glance we 'throw a blow of the eye': *Jeter un coup d'oeil*).

Artist David Hockney has since the 1980s explored ways to use photography in such a way as to more accurately represent human perception with photography, by combining multiple printed photographs into single images, which he dubbed "joiners". Hockney's "joiners" subsequently inspired numerous photographers to explore this technique.<sup>64</sup> The resultant works created in this way, however, present a fragmented representation of human perception that does not accurately resonate with my experience of place. I therefore choose to employ the capabilities of Photoshop to create seemingly seamless combinations of frames, and to then at a later stage manually select what elements of each frame to reveal or conceal.

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<sup>64</sup> See for example the work of Joel Myles and Sohei Nishino.

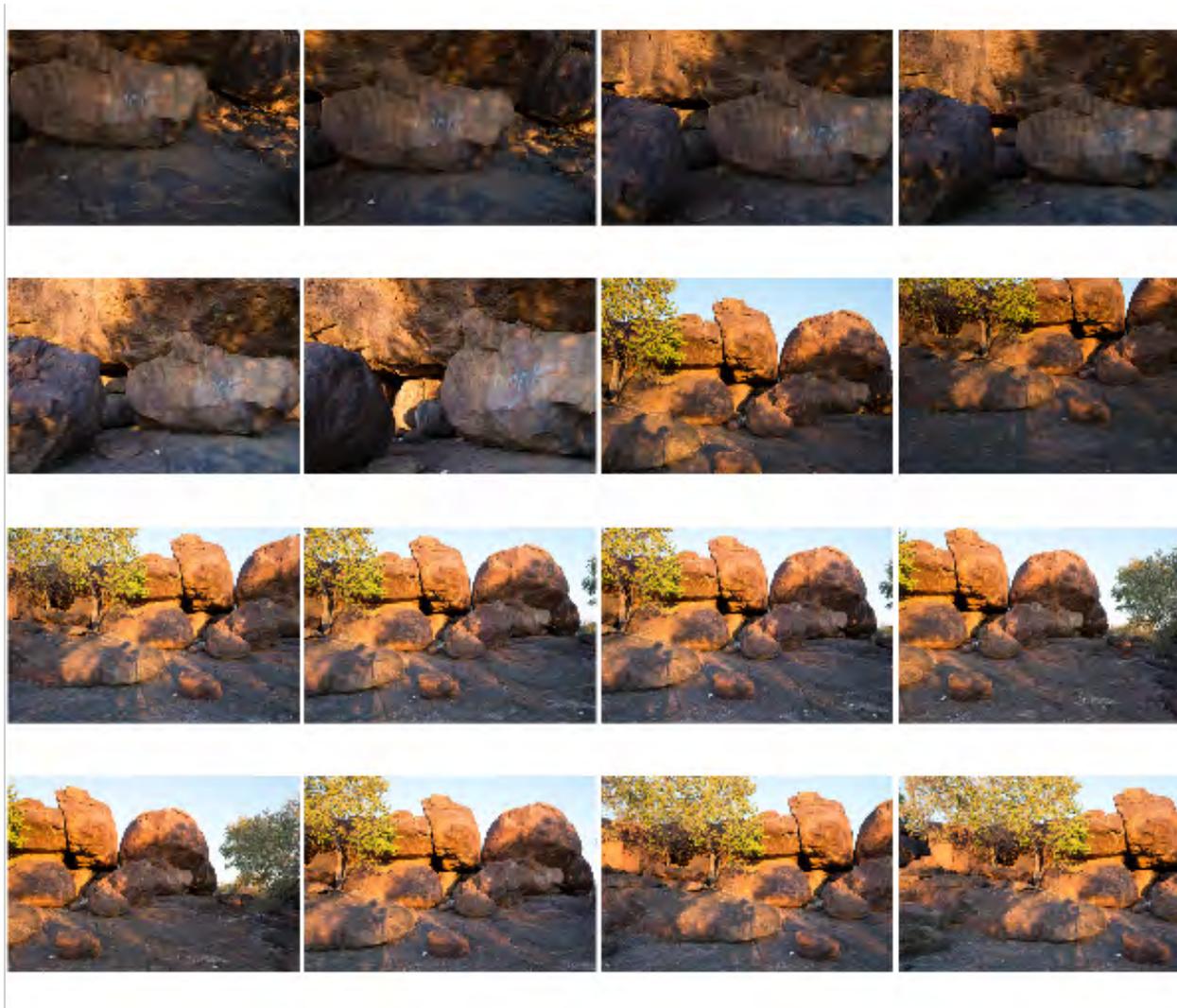


Figure 33: A. de Klerk, 2016, Multiple glances.



Figure 34: 2016, Multiple glances combined in one frame.

In this way, multiple digital frames which approximate the glances with which I perceive the environment are combined into one seamless scene, which might seem like a single still photograph, but on close inspection, subtle disruptions and distortions can be discerned. While photographing, the imagination is still employed in visualising the combinations of images and the possibilities of subtle manipulations of tones that can be made later. It is this full process that constitutes the camera's mediation, or infolding / interpretive aid in revealing the world as a continuation of the past into future expectations.

In the constant cycle of photographing and reviewing, I am faced by my own way of looking-with this photographic system. It is impossible to refrain from aestheticising and judging and eventually interrogating the basis upon which such judgements are made. In reviewing, I am immediately confronted with what I notice and what I avoid, how I position myself in relation to this space and the people, and how I thus shape my world. The thousands of (sometimes almost identical) 'glances' recorded on the hard-drive show me what I might have missed without the camera, but at the same time it shows up what I instinctively disregard or more consciously try to hide. These

images reiterate that this world is unhomelike (*umheimlich*) and that it is "not of my making" (Rose, 2012: 762). This photographing-reviewing-photographing is a demanding process because it is a process of doubt and questioning that disrupts often taken-for-granted unities of self and place.

### 3.2.4 Being-with people

Ethics is rooted in a responsibility to something that exceeds us, a responsibility already implied in our being before we even reflect on it. Far from an ethics derived from the transcendental or practical imperatives of a closed subjectivity, what we call subjectivity instead arises in face of imperatives, imperatives that we inherently face because we are open to something that exceeds us (Morris, 2004: 176).

The digital medium allows the photographer to work on the image while still in the environment depicted. This way of working might resemble the practice of drawing or painting in the landscape, although it maintains the immediacy of photography. The viewing screen, as with a painter's easel, is equally visible to the artist as to passers-by. The immediacy of the captured image, however, allows people photographed to view the images of themselves. This often has the result of inspiring people to engage in performances for the benefit of the camera and their sense of play. Through this interaction, the environment is transformed into a stage, and the

photographer becomes a reluctant stage director, often having to placate hesitant actors, and discourage over-eager ones. Either way, the people involved are mostly<sup>65</sup> voluntary collaborators in creating the final scenes. In the situation represented below, the children enjoyed performing for the camera and then running back to see how their antics were captured with the slow shutter speed. I entertained them by changing the shutter speed setting and allowing them to experiment.

Having obtained general permission from the tribal authority to photograph in the area, I still need to obtain permission from home owners and individuals as I go along. My enquiries are often initially met with doubt and uncertainty, requiring me to explain my purpose at length. People have expectations or misgivings regarding appearing in newspapers or on television, but mostly lose interest when they learn that the photographs will be used as 'artworks' in an exhibition that is part of a research project about landscape photography and place.

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<sup>65</sup> The exceptions are cases where the people who appear in the images are too far away to notice me and the camera.

In certain cases, I encountered understandable hostility in the form of possessiveness over property. In one case, for example, some gentlemen confronted me regarding what they perceived as me 'taking' Bakgatla land, which points to an association of photographing with a camera on a tripod with land surveillance and documentation. From informal discussions with people I met while photographing, I gather that photography as a medium is seen as a tool for news documentation and control. I was generally able to convince questioners that my purposes were different by explaining that I was visiting my 'home town of long ago'. In the repeated proclamation of my purposes, I, however, started questioning whether my purposes were really not about control and possession. In a sense I *am* claiming this place as part of me in the role it played in shaping my person and how I relate to and shape the (my) world through photography.



Figure 35: A. de Klerk, 2016, Children experimenting with motion blur.

### 3.2.5 Photographing as Marking and Claiming

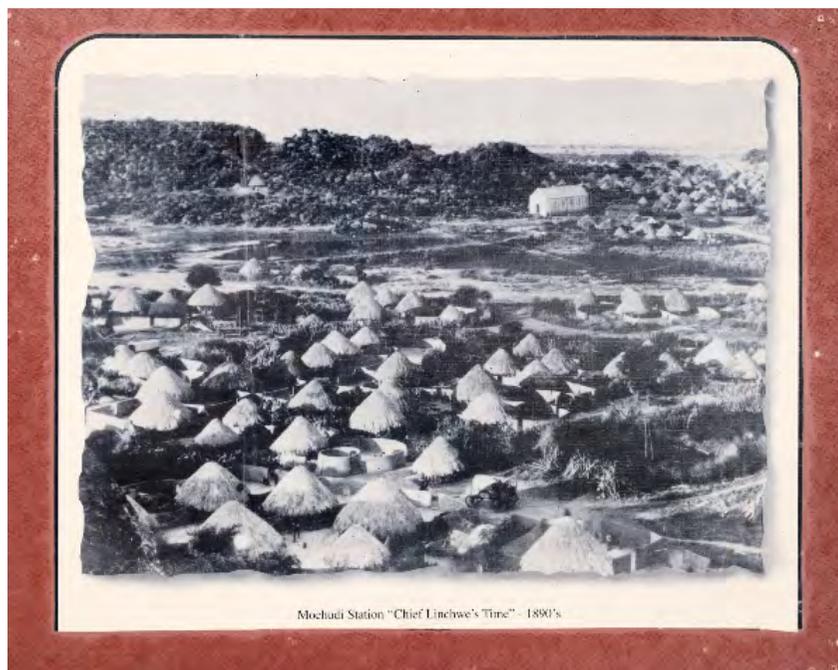


Figure 36: Reproduction of image titled “Mochudi Station ‘Chief Linchwe’s Time’ – 1890” as displayed in and reproduced with permission of the Phuthadikobo museum.

From the church bell built on boulders behind the Dutch Reformed Church (the big building at the foot of the hill shown in Figure 36) one can see a part of the sprawling village. The church building is

still the same, but most of the thatched huts have been replaced or rebuilt. According to Grant and Grant (1995: 30), the Bakgatla were the first tribe in Botswana to start incorporating Western building materials and styles into their own building practices. The building style of the Bakgatla has been changing at least since they settled at Mochudi.

If one continues to the plateau of the hill, behind the Deborah Retief Hospital, one could find some sketches etched into the rocks (see Figure 37). There are many examples of where children seemingly scratch, paint, or draw school exercises on flat rock surfaces. In Schapera’s (1942) *A Short History of the Bakgatla-bagaKgafela of Bechuanaland Protectorate*, he mentions that “a special itinerant teacher was also appointed for the boys at the cattle posts who were unable to attend the schools in the villages”. One could speculate whether there is a link between this practice of conducting school outside at the cattle posts, and the markings of learning that found outside.

Photography and language allow me to show and tell about the lived-place that is Mochudi which is constantly changing without ever becoming something else. Photographs from different eras and

words from historians such as the Grants (residents of Mochudi for decades) and Schapera can be incorporated into this telling and showing. In this way I can show and tell about change and development. This development, however, does not necessarily have a specific direction, as presupposed by ideas such as “progress towards civilisation” that Schapera (1942: 23;27) credits to the rule of Chief Linchwe (c. 1855-1924) and his son, Isang, who was regent from 1920-1941. The regent chief, Isang referred to European civilisation as “this fearless and unconquerable beast the white man calls civilization”. Isang did not see civilisation as progress per se, but realised that his tribe would have to adapt for the sake of their wellbeing (Schapera, 1942: 49).



Figure 37: A. de Klerk, 2016, Solar calendar scratched into a boulder on top of a hill overlooking Deborah Retief Hospital.

Isang actively promoted education and the implementation of Western technologies towards the wellbeing of his tribe, while at the same time actively re-instating traditional rites and practices that were fast becoming neglected due to Western and especially Christian influences.<sup>66</sup> In this way, 'foreign' technologies were incorporated into traditional practices of especially agriculture, animal husbandry, water management, and building practices, as already mentioned.

The constant change shown here is rather an instance of the never-ending, never-complete projects of dwelling, which Rose (2012) labels as 'claiming and marking'. The photographs and histories are, in turn, markings and claims in their own right. They mark the present (my present) by laying claim to the past, but this claim is tenuous, frail, and fragmentary. The digital images remain invisible and inaccessible unless decoded by software that is not of my making

and can be wiped into the non-existence of the past with a click of a button.

### 3.2.6 Non-coincidence of life and land

The notion of a momentary congruence between the culture one bears and the ground that bears one has shattered against reality into uncountable fragments (Robinson, as cited in Wylie, 2012: 379).

Ingold (2011: 45) states that "[i]t is almost a truism to say that we perceive not with the eyes, the ears or the surface of the skin, but with the whole body", but beyond this notion of embodied perception, our vision is also embodied. I do not see with my eyes only. I see with my body as well as the environment, in the sense that it allows me to move and movement allows a crossing of my body and the world. Yet it is also through the constraints of my movement imposed by my body together with the environment that I can sense and make sense of the world (Morris, 2004: 109). When Morris speaks of 'world' in this sense, he includes technological artefacts.

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<sup>66</sup> The missionary stationed at Mochudi at the time, Mr J. Reyneke, in consultation with Isang, encouraged the preservation of the tribal culture parallel to the Christian faith as far as possible (Schapera, 1942: 24).

As shown in Section 2.5, postphenomenological and post-human perspectives understand technology to be integrated into the sensing organs as well as into the world in such a way that self, technology, and world are simultaneously co-constituted rather than being part of the world, separate from the sensing subject.

In this co-constitutive process, the camera system structures my movement in that I have to move to where the various elements that I aim to include in the frame of the viewing screen are aligned, arranged, or obscured. By the movement of my body and the tripod, I place the horizon line in relation to the potential movement afforded by the environment represented by elements such as paths, doorways, gates, and roads. This searching movement<sup>67</sup> continues until I find a place to stand and a trajectory for my camera to move

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<sup>67</sup> An effort to record this movement towards a place to stand and photograph, however, results in images that blur the environment into uniformity and emphasise my own bodily movement over and at the cost of that which I want to describe.

<sup>68</sup> Ingold (2011: 148) described “wayfaring” as the embodied experience of living “through, around, to and from” places, alongside paths, but, according

through in order to capture the various ‘glances’ that I aim to sift through and combine later.

This process described above relates to the involved practice of Ingold’s understanding of dwelling as “wayfaring”<sup>68</sup> rather than the “distanced contemplation” associated with the viewing of landscape. It relates to Wylie and Ingold’s description of walking as dwelling and to Tim Robinson’s purpose in his landscape writing, which is to “suggest that land and life are not so much laminated or superimposed into each-other, but are rather interwoven as strands within a single yet infinitely complex fabric” (Wylie, 2012: 373).

In Mochudi, as in Morgenster, I could walk to wherever I needed to be. I did not need to drive. This allowed me to engage with other pedestrians, some of whom I got to know better during my two recent visits. Wylie (2012) discusses Ingold’s notion that walking as

to Ingold, “by the same token, human existence is not fundamentally place-bound, as Tilley (2004: 25) maintained, but place-binding. It unfolds not in places but along paths”. Ingold’s “wayfarer” could be illustrated by Bill Brandt’s *Coal Searcher*, (England, 1930s, printed 1981).

dwelling-in-the-world produces a “meaningful, experiential landscape”. From my experience of photographing in Mochudi (and Morgenster), I would argue that walking-with-a-camera is a dwelling-in-the-world that produces not only a meaningful experiential landscape, but also weaves into the place another thread: An expression of this experiential landscape (which I prefer to call the lived environment).

Seemingly embedded in the place, I can lose myself (or rather the distinction between myself and the place), but this would be an idealistic and romantic gloss of aspects of this embeddedness that bely the disjunctions experienced in the self-camera-place relations described in the previous section. Wylie (2012) argued (through reference to the landscape writing of Tim Robinson) that a conception of complete coincidence between self and landscape is a simplification of experience of place inherent in the loaded word ‘dwelling’. Yet, Rose as contends, in his later writing Heidegger framed the loss of dwelling and the anxiety over this loss as ‘originary’ to human dwelling, thus acknowledging the complexity of human-place relations.

What then is the camera’s role in this loss and dislocation? Ihde (as discussed in Section 2.5) has explored how technology is folded into this texture of experience, but far from merely causing such dislocations and fragmentations, technology mediates this non-coincidence. The metaphor of vision “clothing the visible” that Merleau-Ponty (1968) uses in *The Visible and the Invisible*, is perhaps telling because, in covering, it also enables and provides mediated access and perhaps protection against the immensity and intensity of embodied experience.

Technology intensifies, augments, and enhances aspects of experience while at the same time inhibiting other aspects (Verbeek, 2010: 134). In this context of photographing place, the photographic technology reduces perception in that it abstracts elements, but it is this abstraction that allows intelligibility. This tool allows me to describe what is to be abstracted and what intensified, to some extent, but I cannot, for instance, choose not to frame; even though I can seamlessly combine various frames, the final combination is still framed to include, for instance, the buildings below the hill on the left, but exclude a bush jutting in distractingly on the other side. I can choose to include motion and sound, within bounds, but I cannot

choose to include the sensation of the crisp air, the fine texture or smell of the dust, without a totally different technological system (or conducting a guided tour). These sensual elements are abstracted from experience and I must rely on the visual (in this case) alone to suggest that which is reduced through photographing. The abstraction of sound and motion provides a stillness that Trigg (2012) finds useful. Roland Barthes (1993: 55) writes about how the still image allows one to close one's eyes to see it and be open to what it shows. The viewing screen, while looking at it in the environment, however, does not impede the hearing faculty. It is perhaps only shifted into the background slightly. Only in the final representation on the screen or book or wall, are we bereft of the other senses and have to rely on the visual and the new environment to suggest the other sensations. It is perhaps not first and foremost hearing that is opposed to vision, but movement, and tactile sensation.

While a certain coherence between self, technology, and place has been argued thus far, Wylie maintains that such coherence is not automatic, nor originary. Rather, the loss of dwelling, the non-coherence, is originary. The loss, and/or the anxiety over possible loss, is the impetus for the activities of dwelling, which is often

difficult work characterised by failure and mistakes at least as much as successes. Dwelling is mostly "eked out and cobbled together" (Wylie, 2012: 377). This is a compromise position (Wylie, 2012: 377). Not bifurcated and dualist with subject as viewer, and object – the landscape – as viewed, but a creative tension of constantly floundering in search of a good way to be in the world.

The camera plays an ambivalent role in this tension; on the one hand it allows me to study place, my relation to it, and the people. With the camera I gain understanding; it mediates my interpretation of the world; I see and interact with others as collaborators and questioners. Beyond this, however, it allows me to see the faltering, stumbling of myself and others in our efforts to claim and mark our places. My 'markings' are often not much more substantial than the shadows I cast on the structures created by others (see Figure 38).



Figure 38: A. de Klerk, 2014, Fence surrounding Nietverdiend Primary School, which seems like the same fence of 20 years ago.

If human experience shrouds the world, as suggested by Merleau-Ponty, and those influenced by him such as Casey, Morris, Ingold, and Trigg, in mediating this experience, then, technology could be seen to add density to this 'shroud' and potentially become a barrier to accessing the environment. There is a possibility of encountering a representation of the world before the world is truly revealed and thus confusing the two. I am confronted by my own (and the camera's) shadow as part of the world already.

According to Flusser (1983: 9), we customarily confuse the world and its representation, which comes to replace, or "screen-over" the world, resulting in the photographer relating in a mode that resembles an *alterity* (Ihde, 2009: 43) relation with the technology. In this relation, the world is removed from the human-technology-world triad and the technology is engaged directly, shifting the environment into the background (Ihde, 2009: 43). My experience of photographing in the environment, however, does not fit this *alterity* structure entirely. This experience would be better described as similar to wearing gloves that protect and inhibit my ability to feel to some extent, but at the same time allows further, more extended engagement with the environment. Morris (2004: 178) writes that

experiencing the world directly through our perceptual senses is already an interpretation that "opens us to a crossing with the world that ultimately points back to death, to our bodily being as spilling over its own boundaries and as open to a world that can spill into us". This statement highlights human vulnerability and therefore the need for mediating technologies to curb this "spilling over" into the world.

### 3.2.7 Conclusion

In this account of photographing Mochudi and Nietverdiend, I considered the mediating role of the digital camera system used with the conclusion that there is a perpetual risk that the hermeneutic function of the technology in the self-camera-place triad will transform into a relation of alterity, thus pushing the place into the background. Working with the camera in the environment, in interaction with my memories, and the people, the strangeness of the still image, rather than becoming a new reality, inspires questioning, or what Trigg (2012) calls phenomenological thinking.

In said triad, the camera system causes me to question a unified idea of 'self', and also the unity of self and place. With questioning, Malpas (2014: 21) refers not to challenging or contradicting, but rather to an attitude of openness to place, a willingness to listen, to be attentive and responsive. The camera translates aspects of the lived environment into still, silent images that encourage such 'listening'. It is such questioning that is the essence of Heidegger's notion of dwelling, as Malpas concluded:

"To dwell is to stand in such a relation of attentiveness and responsiveness, of listening and of

questioning. The question of dwelling is never a question ever settled or finally resolved. To dwell is to remain in a state in which what it is to dwell – and what it is to dwell here, in this place – is a question constantly put anew" (Malpas 2014: 21).

### 3.3 Kempton Park

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In the previous section I recounted how the interactions between my physical experience of Mochudi and Nietverdiend as interpreted through the viewing screen of the mirrorless camera and my childhood memories of it. The digital live-view also functioned as interface between myself and the environment, allowing me to question my own photographing as a form of immaterial and transient marking and interpret the rhythms of movement of these rural spaces in a specific way in still imagery.

The industrial city of Kempton Park where I live at the time of writing this thesis, offers a different pace of movement from the previous places I explored in this study. Kempton Park is a part of my present experience which I am still getting to know as my home. The direct physical perception of this industrial city therefore dominates my experience here, whereas, in the previous two places, imagination and memory played a bigger role. For historical information about Kempton Park I therefore draw mainly on the research conducted by Joanna Behrens (2005)

for historical background of Modderfontein (an important part of Kempton Park's history).

My working process in this place was to some extent similar to the one I used in Mochudi in that I worked with the live-view function on the viewing screen of the digital camera, using a tripod. For this place, however, I created a series of single-shot video images, which included the ambient sound of the area.

#### 3.3.1 An Industrial origin

What is now known as Kempton Park developed around a small railway siding on the Zuurfontein farm (see Figure 39). Built as a direct route between Pretoria, the gold fields around Johannesburg and the East Coast, the railroad, and the little station made the establishment of a dynamite factory nearby possible. Lying about 30 km to the east of the gold mines, the site of Modderfontein, 10 km from Zuurfontein station, was just far away enough from the gold mines for safety and close enough for convenience (Behrens, 2005: 61). The opening of the dynamite factory necessitated a further railway link, development of housing for workers, and eventually the township of Kempton

Park (named after a town in Germany) was officially established in 1903 (Heritage Contracts and Archaeological Consulting, 2014: 17).

Kempton Park saw enormous growth with the establishment of the Jan Smuts Airport (now O.R. Thambo International Airport) in 1952. The site for the airport was once again chosen because it was away from gold-bearing reefs, on a plateau. In 2010, rapid train transport to and from the airport necessitated two Gautrain stations in Kempton Park, linking it to Pretoria, Sandton, and Johannesburg's inner city.

The land and air traffic of South Africa's busiest airport creates a high level of white noise that contributes to an atmosphere of perpetual activity, yet the purposefully designed industrial landscape initiated by the Modderfontein factory town resulted in a fair amount of unbuilt spaces lined with tall fir trees, willows, and poplars. According to Behrens (2005: 64), this style of design aided in the control of "paths of movement and lines of visual appropriation" which must be understood within the broad framework of 19<sup>th</sup>-century industrial design.



Figure 39: Zuurfontein Station, 1901 (courtesy of Modderfontein Dynamite Factory Museum).

Behrens (2005: 63) describes the Modderfontein landscape as purposefully styled as, or transformed into a German rural village (see Figure 40), which is also echoed in the name 'Kempton' (an anglicised version of 'Kempen', the home town in Germany of the

then owner of the Zuurfontein farm (Heritage Contracts and Archaeological Consulting, 2014).

The purposefully planned *things* that created the basic structure and character of Kempton Park, however, soon developed beyond their initial naïve and paternalistic purposes inspired by the ‘lessons learnt’ from the Industrial Revolution (Behrens, 2005: 62). As Behrens (2005: 66) describes, for instance, the ethnically designated and separated workers’ neighbourhoods and accommodation became overcrowded within five years of their construction. These *things* which cannot be categorised according to the nature/culture binary – railways, roads, trees, dams, fences, buildings, pollution (see Figure 40 to Figure 44) – have their own vitality in Jane Bennett’s (2010: 5) terms, with agency and capacity to affect beyond human will, and are not “entirely reducible to the contexts in which (human) subjects set them, never entirely exhausted by their semiotics”.

Contemporary Kempton Park in my experience is a place characterised by rhythms of mobility, as people tend to live far from their workplaces. A large portion of the workforce still lives

in the neighbouring township of Thembisa, which was established in 1957 when black South Africans were resettled from Alexandra and other areas in Edenvale, Kempton Park, Midrand, and Germiston (South African History Archive [SAHA], 2011). The criss-crossing of railways and roads, wetlands, and a small stream causes frequent bottlenecks in road traffic. It is this atmosphere of perpetual motion that inspired the way I photographed.



Figure 40: View of 'Hamburg', an ethnically designated village in Modderfontein, with Mixed Pickles Street in the foreground, 1895 (courtesy of the Modderfontein Dynamite Factory Museum).



Figure 41: Dam III under construction. c. 1895-1899 (courtesy of the Modderfontein Dynamite Factory Museum).



Figure 42: Four acid concentration sheds with nitric acid plant in the background. c. 1895-1899 (courtesy of the Modderfontein Dynamite Factory Museum).



Figure 43: Factory III from northeast. c. 1895-1899 (courtesy of the Modderfontein Dynamite Factory Museum).



Figure 44: Willow trees at the bottom of Mixed Pickles Street (Antwerp Avenue). c. 1895-1899 (courtesy of the Modderfontein Dynamite Factory Museum).

### 3.3.2 Photographing in Kempton Park

Having recently moved to this city, I had no previous experience or memories that directed where I looked, or to what I paid attention to. My choices of what to photograph were instead motivated by my own movements: my daily routes to and from work, family responsibilities, and leisure activities such as running and cycling in the Modderfontein Nature Reserve that now neighbours the old dynamite factory.

The initial plan for photographing in this third place, was to document the environment where I currently lived and knew quite well (which was Vereeniging at the start of the project). Using the video capabilities of the full-frame DSLR camera to capture still images, video footage, and sound recordings, together with video footage from a drone camera, the plan was to produce an audio-visual production. The DSLR camera with a range of lenses, as well as the drone camera, were available for me to work with at the institution where I worked at the time of writing. When I moved to Kempton Park, my situation changed to some extent, as the place where I currently live was not well known to me, as

Vereeniging was. Although I used the same photographic system, I gradually developed a new approach to respond to Kempton Park specifically.

I had started planning a trial run of the exhibition of which this work would form part during the early stages of photographing in Kempton Park and was still experimenting with how I would use the full-frame DSLR camera. In this experimentation, a dialogue between how I experienced the place, how I photographed, and how I thought about how and where the work would be displayed, developed.

I stood or moved in this environment as yet another *thing* that is affected and can affect other things. Specific patterns of movement captured my attention while driving/running/cycling. Upon return to these vantage points to photograph, I stood still to study the area and so noticed even more layers of movement. By taking time to study and 'lose' myself in what I observed, I entered a mood of quiet fascination, or enchantment, to use Bennet's (2001: 5) term. For Bennett (2001: 5), a mood or

atmosphere of enchantment constitutes a specific spacetime within which things are experienced:

Enchantment entails a state of wonder, and one of the distinctions of this state is the temporary suspension of chronological time and bodily movement. To be enchanted, then, is to participate in a momentarily immobilising encounter; it is to be transfixed, spellbound ... To be simultaneously transfixed in wonder and transported by sense, to be both caught up and carried away – enchantment is marked by this odd combination of somatic effects (Bennett, 2001: 5).

Mediated by the camera in stills mode, the experience becomes contained within the visual 2:3 frame, but also within the temporal frame of the exposure time. Although the frame serves to reduce the field of perception, within each frame the sense of being transfixed is intensified. I responded to specific relationships between things in the environment (the optical perspective of the lens; the line of polluted air; light and shadow; people; things moving at different speeds (see Figure 45) by pressing the shutter release. By photographing still images, I responded to the uniqueness of each moment of interaction. In the top-right image reproduced in Figure 45, for instance, the trajectory of the movement of the two men

seems to be reinforced by the triangular shape created by the darker shade of grass between the fence and the lighter grass in the foreground. The shapes in the background formed in this scene by a Gautrain bridge in Modderfontein – a transport technology functions in the background to shape human movement. In the image just below it (bottom right of Figure 45), the blurred rush of the oncoming truck seems to be arrested by the lamp pole. Because it is captured as a still image, the blurred shape of the truck seems to be gently kissing, rather than rushing past the pole.

An important aspect of the enchantment that I experienced, however, was the repetition of movement; the layers of movement in various directions and at different speeds, to which I responded by extending the temporal frame of the image, i.e. capturing video instead of stills, which in turn also allowed me to respond to the sounds of the city. By recording static video shots, I could use the static framing to intensify attention and convey the sense of being transfixed, while at the same time also capturing the repetitions and patterns of movement.

The availability of multiple screens at an exhibition venue I was considering presented the option to work with multiple video

clips displayed on separate screens, thereby constructing a visual narrative of which the viewer was in control of the editing by choosing how long to view each clip before moving to the next clip. Although the final exhibition was eventually held elsewhere, the possibilities offered by the multiple screens influenced the way I photographed, and eventually became an important aspect of the exhibition as discussed in detail in Phase 2.



Figure 45: De Klerk, A. 2016. Experimentation with stills of Kempton Park.

### 3.3.3 Transfixed and transported

In a mode of enchantment as Bennett describes it, there is an interaction of agencies. On the one hand, one must participate willingly in this encounter and pay attention. On the other hand, one is captured and transported by whatever is the source of the somatic effects. In these situations, I responded to things that have captured my attention, or 'neared' towards me and thereby I also participate in this 'nearing'. The concept of 'nearing' is central to Heidegger's notion of 'dwelling'. According to Malpas's (2006: 77) interpretation, "'nearing' is not just an overcoming of a purely objective spatial distance but also a 'picking out' or a 'bringing into salience' that overcomes the distance of inattention or 'not-seeing'".

My choice of lenses to some extent overcame the restrictions on my movement imposed by fences, massive buildings, highways, and railways, by allowing me to select elements I wanted to include in the frame without needing to move physically closer, as can be seen in Figure 46 for which I used a 300 mm lens. Malpas (2006:77) describes this 'nearing' as analogous to cinematic

techniques that, through cutting to close-up shots or zooming in on details, bring particular things "in the vast array of things presented to us in experience" to our attention, or into salience. Cinema is also analogous to human experience, according to Malpas (2006:77), in the way in which it presents the situatedness of human existence, in that a cinematic representation "always involves an orientation to one's surroundings that consists in a particular configuration of those surroundings so that certain features emerge as more salient than others".

The cinematic analogy, however, fails in a way that relates to how photographic (cinematic and still) technology reduces and augments human experience. In 1934, Vertov (1992: xviii) claimed that "from the viewpoint of the ordinary eye you see un-truth. From the viewpoint of the cinematic eye (aided by special cinematic means, in this case, accelerated shooting) you see the truth". While this kind of truth is no longer trusted, Vertov's statement holds in that the photographic image allows things that initially went unnoticed to become salient upon review.

The kind of cinematic truth that Vertov champions represents an objectivity that is in apparent opposition to the situated perspective essential to human experience but could rather be understood in terms of reduction and augmentation. Photographic mediation reduces situatedness by virtue of a heightened yet limited objectivity. Even so, as Malpas points out, the cinematic image is always emblematic of human situatedness if not fully correspondent with it. The limited objectivity of photographic representation relates to the experience of enchantment which Andrea Nightingale (2009) describes as a mode of focused attention and heightened awareness in that it isolates the focus of attention within the visual frame. Nightingale (2009: 15) celebrates such partial, situated knowledge that allows for wonder instead of certainty. For me as the photographer standing in the place, the scene that the camera is trained on does not isolate me entirely. Other things can still 'steal' my attention away.

Malpas also notes two ways in which cinema fails as analogy for human experience. Firstly, the 'nearing' that Malpas illustrates

with his analogy of cinematic technique is not primarily visual nor is any single perceptual sense more or less important. As Malpas (2006: 77) states, the nearing at issue here involves the interplay of all our senses and typically focuses on things or aspects of things, on events or particular features of events. The live view of the video-enabled DSLR technology allows me to be in a place as inhabitant (using all my senses) and therefore part of the place. It does not isolate me from the environment as the black cloth required to view the viewing screen of early cameras did.

Malpas (2006: 77) further cautions that the "cinematic example may also suggest that it is we who bring things close through some act of choice or decision – as the camera brings things close to it through the adjustment of its lens". Human existential situatedness, however, occurs in the interplay between physical and more ephemeral things and systems (Malpas 2006:77).

Things draw me and grab my attention, even as I look and focus on something else. Standing in a place with two cameras, each with a different lens, looking for something to photograph, my glance would be drawn to what I heard, saw, or smelled.



Figure 46: De Klerk, A. 2018. Frame grab of scene videoed with 300 mm lens.

I could then allow my attention to be distracted by this new element while continuing to video another shot. The long lenses allowed me to capture distant elements with tight framing, yet the sound that my equipment recorded emanated from what was close to the camera. The variety of lenses allowed me to cast my glance near as well as far while I, as photographer, remained stationary.

Within each scene, particular spatial and temporal relations would come into existence to produce a unique event, an assemblage, as discussed in Section 2.6, that is constituted in the becoming-together of the self, camera, and place. In Figure 47, for instance the failing light necessitated using a wide aperture, which creates a very shallow depth of field, further exaggerated by the long lens. The housing development in the background is rendered out of focus, as are moving things that pass in front of the lens. Photographing in this way was in a sense an act of setting a process in motion, which was continued by the camera and place. Although I could choose the perspective and set the framing and exposure (calculated automatically by the camera light meter,

requiring only slight adjustments on my part), I could not control the sound or the extent to which the stillness of the single-shot video clips would be disrupted. In a sense, these shots recorded the results of a cause-and-effect experiment, in which the technological artefacts and the place were the main agents that created a specific atmosphere through their relation to each other. As mentioned in Section 2.6, Ash (2013: 23) defines atmosphere in this context as specific space-times generated through the mutual 'perturbation' of objects, where 'perturbation' refers to the effect that objects have on other objects, independent of the presence of human beings.

In the same way, every object that forms part of the place relates to every other object, including human beings, and a general atmosphere is created through selective 'perturbations' or disruptions that become my personal experience of place. In these terms, there is a particular time-space that emanates from the interaction between the DSLR camera and the environment, made visible to human perception through the recording of sound and motion in these single, static shots. With each shot

recorded on the camera, a particular atmosphere arises that is more than mere cause and effect.

Through this photographic event, Kempton Park was in the process of becoming a place for me, through technological mediation that served to perturb, destabilise, and eventually decentre my agency as photographer and redistributing it between the other elements in the photographer-camera-place triad. Furthermore, the distinctions between self, technology, and place became blurred through having been simultaneously co-constituted. Thinking about objects in terms of the atmospheres they generate incorporates technological objects into the understanding of place – an essential interaction in the technologically mediated contemporary context.

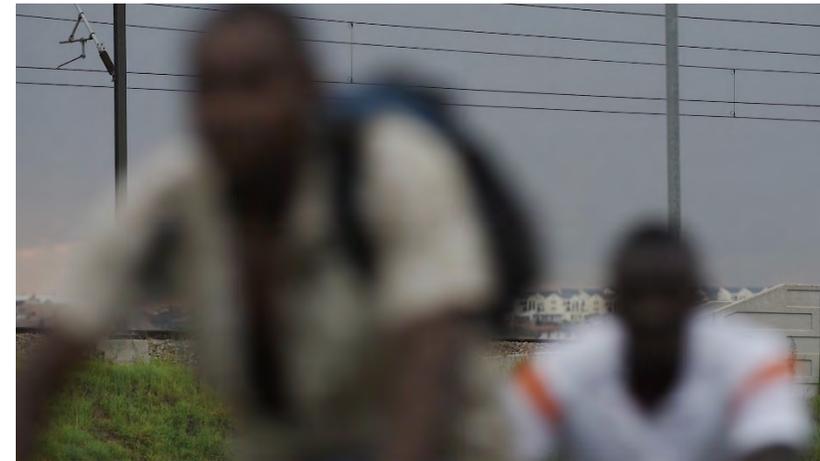


Figure 47 a and b: A. de Klerk, 2017, Frame grabs from *Centenary Road* video clip.

### 3.3.4 Repetitions

In *The Enchantment of Modern Life*, Bennett (2001) develops a phenomenology of secular enchantment and explores enchanting aspects of the modern world (without distinguishing between nature and culture) outside of purposeful design. Enchantment, according to Bennett (2001: 36), “seems to require, among other things, the presence of a pattern of recognizable ensembling of sounds, smells, tastes, forms, colors textures. One could say, then, enchantment functions by means of a kind of repetition”. This notion of repetition is particularly resonant with the fascination I experienced while studying the scenes that captured my attention, but as Bennett also points out, there are particular kinds of repetition that enchant.

The compressed perspective of the 300 mm lens, which I used most often, allowed the stillness of the single shot to be disrupted unexpectedly by things – undefined because out of focus – passing in front of the lens (Figure 47b). Such disruptions happen

according to a pattern structured by the history of the place as much as by chance. In Figure 47 the same ridge is visible in the background as in Figure 41 of the construction of the dam around 1895.

Each disruption of the stillness is a surprise, and new. Even with repeated viewing, each repetition is different because of the previous instances. Each repetition is “always undergoing mini-metamorphoses” (Bennett, 2010: 39-40) and results in a system of relations that is “more spiral than cyclical” (Bennett, 2010: 39-40). In this interaction, with each repetition, I am also changed in miniscule ways.

Other kinds of repetition also ‘grab’ me, such as the birds (visible only as specs in Figure 48) flying behind the steel birds that are part of the construction of the ‘whirlybirds’ on the other side of the road, while I am paying attention to the planes taking off and landing over the highway.



Figure 48: A. de Klerk, 2016, Frame grab from video clip showing a 'Whirlybirds' advertisement installation across the highway behind O.R. Tambo Airport.

### 3.3.5 An alien perspective

As self-conscious being aware of time and bodily vicissitudes, we are longing (and unbelonging) beings. Our minds reach out beyond ourselves – beyond bodily and temporal presence (Nightingale, 2009: 32).

In addition to the DSLR system, I worked sporadically with a drone camera as the opportunity arose. With the drone, I used an external sound recorder that would necessarily also record the ambient sounds at ground level. This would later be synchronised with the drone footage. With the drone I could gain a vantage point impossible with my own body, and allowed me to visually describe, from above, the way in which the mesh of routes connect various places (Figure 49).

The drone camera is controlled by a smartphone on which a live feed of the footage being captured is displayed while the movement of the drone itself was controlled by a former helicopter pilot who assisted me. My attention was, however, fully focused on the small screen of the phone, and on providing instructions to the pilot who controlled the drone remotely with the aid of a global positioning system built into it.



Figure 49: A. de Klerk, 2016, Frame grab from drone footage with no lens correction.

For me as photographer the process was an exercise in orientation as the camera could be turned to face towards me or away from me; left became right and right became left; forward became backward and vice versa. The pilot explained to me that he managed to stay orientated by imagining himself sitting in the ‘cockpit’ of the drone. The pilot’s experience of flying the drone corresponds with what Besmer (2015: 67) describes as the experience of robotic re-embodiment, which involves “the sense of inhabiting the remote machinery despite the lack of tactile

feedback from the remote environment". Besmer (2015) explains that the sense of 'inhabiting', in this case the electronic device, is primarily due to the real-time visual feedback relayed by the drone to the controlling device which the pilot operates. At the same time, in order to operate the drone effectively, the controlling device becomes an extension of the pilot's body schema, resulting in what Besmer (2015: 67) calls a "double embodiment".

In the same way, I imagined myself up in the sky, looking through the camera viewfinder, with one eye, but using beacons in the environment to navigate (in communication with the pilot), rather than my own bodily schema. Yet I was not in direct control of the drone camera. I was reliant on the automated functions built into the hardware and software that made up the drone and controlling devices as well as on the technique of the pilot. The high level of automation makes the technology relatively easy to use, but at the same time automatically shapes the resultant image.

In this photographic event, instead of the camera becoming an embodied extension of my perceptual faculties, it was I that was drawn into the body of the camera. I had to replace my own body schema with that of the camera and navigate using references to the place, rather than reference to my own body's left-right/front-back orientation.

Furthermore, the drone technology produces a relation between photographer and place in which the physical environment augments my normal navigation in terms of my own body schema, thereby producing a new, extended navigational schema.

My experimentation with the drone camera did not result in footage that I felt contributed to an exploration of my being-in a landscape, as I was not yet comfortable with the level of transformation of my own experience. Although the drone allowed me to experience a kind of kinship with the place in that, in combination with the drone, it replaced my own bodily schema while navigating, I simultaneously felt alienated from the environment. It is, however, precisely for this reason that I still include it in this thesis: it demonstrates the paradox

of ecological thinking. Even though I can rethink our being-in-the-world as decentralised, and part of an ecological system, I remain self-aware, and as such the fragile and small centre of my own limited, yet frightening world.

The experimentation with the drone brought an underlying sense of strangeness that I experienced to the fore, which carries through to my subsequent work in Kempton Park. One example of this sense of strangeness can be demonstrated by the lack of interaction with people. Instead of engaging with me as photographer and with the viewing screen, as people in Mochudi had done, the Kempton Parkers walked past quickly or chose a different route. In part, their lack of engagement could be ascribed to my use of longer lenses, which normally gave a fair distance between me and the people who appeared in the scenes I captured (see for example Figure 46). I became part of the scene but was mostly treated like just another thing in the environment that people needed to walk around, avoid, or ignore. This experience was paradoxical in the sense that I experienced only technological relationships, a situation which Gauthier (2004: 115) laments as having destroyed connections

between human beings. Yet these technological relationships made me part of the 'assemblage'.

There is a paradox here which Nightingale (2009: 36) articulates in terms of human-nature relations: "Nature is strange and alien, but it is also related to us in an infinite number of ways." In photographing in Kempton Park, I experienced this relation as part of the 'assemblage' of the events I videoed, which includes industries, transport systems, and so on.

While photographing Figure 50 for example, the sun shone out from under the clouds as it set, creating a strange colour in the dark, polluted sky that was enchanting to watch as it changed. Even though this scene was somewhat alienating, with cars and people passing by without acknowledging my presence, streaks of rain catching the last light can be seen as they drip from my umbrella.

As Bennett (2010: xii) points out, enchantment is not reserved for natural things and scenes and is not centred around human affect only, but rather "the agency of the things that produce (helpful, harmful) effects in human and other bodies. Organic and inorganic bodies, natural and cultural objects (these distinctions

are not particularly salient here) all are affective". This is an important realisation with ethical implications, according to Bennett (2010: xi), because it can "augment the motivational energy needed to move selves from the endorsement of ethical principles to the actual practice of ethical behaviours".



Figure 50: Frame grab from video clip in rain.

### 3.3.6 Conclusion

[T]he relation between edges and the in-between is ... a matter of dynamic Becoming – of a measureless productive interplay. Or perhaps we can say: of an intense intertangement in which each element pervades the other in endless permutations (Casey, 2008: 7).

In this reflection on my photographing in Kempton park, I explored resonances between a new-materialist ecological understanding of enchantment and the enchantment of a South African city as mediated in moving imagery. The visual, spatial, and temporal frames of the video clips became containers of unique atmospheres; assemblages contained in-between the edges of the image. The visual frame here questions where the edges of things are by revealing visual repetitions and interactions between far-removed things such as lighting and wires; ornamental and living birds.

In this way, the framing that takes place while photographing becomes “a provisional structure that makes something else possible” (Casey, 2008: 1). By photographing Kempton Park, I attempt to “describe the characteristic affective qualities of a

complex assemblage such as a society or even a city” that Ben Anderson (2009: 80) maintains would have risked reification of the inexhaustible complexities of affective life”. Instead, I sought to emphasise the continual process of becoming as I experienced it physically.

In this first phase of my research project I did not look at exotic places, but chose to review my way of looking at the places where I already was.

Wetherell used Haraway’s (2004: 338, cited in Wetherell, 2012: 12-13) metaphor of the entangled twine to describe affective practices – on starting to disentangle what at first seems to be two strings, one might very well discover that it was one single string all along, but the process of disentangling preconceived ideas and ideologies from direct perception, infolded through the camera, in the experience of place seems like a lifetime’s work that is only initiated with this present study.

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