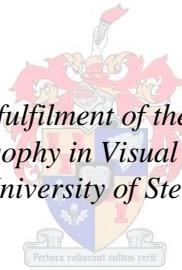# Fragments of Modernity, Shadows of the Gothic:
questions of representation and perception in William Kentridge's
I am not me, the horse is not mine (2008).

by
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Thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree
Master of Philosophy in Visual Arts (Illustration)
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Supervisor: Ms Kathryn Smith
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December 2012

Declaration

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Lucy Stuart-Clark
November 2012

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Abstract

Fragments of Modernity, Shadows of the Gothic: questions of representation and perception in William Kentridge's *I am not me, the horse is not mine* (2008)

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Contemporary South African artist William Kentridge's experimentation with the visual strategies of European modernism and nineteenth-century optical devices, particularly the fragmented figure and shadow perception, has been well documented in contemporary cultural discourse. It is, however, something for which he is often criticized. In this dissertation I will demonstrate that Kentridge's enduring interest in European modernism and the processes of human perception are in fact inextricably linked. I will further argue that the significance of this connection resides in that they are both critical visual strategies for exploring the fragmented nature of a postmodern postcolonial subjectivity in a South African contemporary cultural context. Kentridge's concern with the subjective nature of the construction of knowledge, of the space between seeing and knowing, memory and reality, is a central motif in his art practice and is understood to be a personal attempt to reconcile his present with the past, South Africa's colonial history with Western history and modernism with postmodernism.

Shaped by theories of altermodernity, neomodern anthropology, and the relationship between the observer and 'the gaze' in contemporary discourse, my dissertation will thus also argue that Kentridge's interrogation of the fragmented nature of human subjectivity could be regarded as being ethnographic and Gothic in nature. His multi-channel video installation, *I am not me, the horse is not mine* (2008), will provide the key visual text for my argument, for it is in this artwork that the inseparability of these concerns are best exemplified, particularly in his experimentation with fragmentation, the Russian avant-garde and shadows. I conclude this research with a discussion of my own creative work, which is a re-imagining and critical investigation of my maternal grandfather's archive of late eighteenth-century family silhouette portraits. As such, I interrogate notions of subjectivity, human perception and an 'altermodern' anthropological quest through a personal lens, in the context of the broader concerns raised by Kentridge's work.

Uittreksel

Fragmente van Moderniteit, Skaduwees van die Gotiese: vrae oor verteenwoordiging en persepsie in William Kentridge se *I am not me, the horse is not mine* (2008)

[Fragments of Modernity, Shadows of the Gothic: questions of representation and perception in William Kentridge's *I am not me, the horse is not mine* (2008)]

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Die kontemporêre Suid-Afrikaanse kunstenaar William Kentridge se eksperimentering met die visuele strategieë van die Europese modernisme en negentiende-eeuse optiese toestelle, veral die gefragmenteerde figuur en skaduwee persepsie, is goed gedokumenteer in die hedendaagse kulturele debat. Dit is egter ook waarvoor hy dikwels gekritiseer word. In hierdie verhandeling sal ek aantoon dat Kentridge se volgehoue belangstelling in die Europese modernisme en die prossese van menslike waarneming onlosmaaklik aan mekaar verbind is. Ek sal verder aanvoer dat die betekenis van hierdie verband daarin geleë is dat albei krities belangrike visuele strategieë is waardeur die gefragmenteerde aard van 'n post-moderne, post-koloniale subjektiwiteit in 'n Suid-Afrikaanse kontemporêre kulturele konteks verken kan word. Kentridge se besorgheid oor die subjektiewe aard van die konstruksie van kennis, van die ruimte tussen 'om te sien' en 'om te weet', herinneringe en die werklikheid, is 'n sentrale motief in sy kuns. Dit word beskou as 'n persoonlike poging tot versoening tussen sy hede en die verlede, Suid-Afrika se koloniale geskiedenis en die Westerse geskiedenis, en modernisme en post-modernisme.

My verhandeling is gebaseer op die teorieë van alter-moderniteit, neo-moderne-antropologie, en die verhouding tussen die waarnemer en 'die staar na' in kontemporêre debat. Ek neem dus ook standpunt in dat Kentridge se ontleding van die gefragmenteerde aard van die menslike subjektiwiteit beskou kan word as etnografies en Goties van aard. Sy multi-kanaal video-installasie, *I am not me, the horse is not mine* (2008), sal die sleutel visuele teks in my beredenering wees, aangesien dit is in hierdie kunswerk is dat die onlosmaaklikheid van hierdie verskynsels die beste beliggaam word, en veral ook in sy eksperimentering met fragmentering, die Russiese *avant-garde* en skaduwees. Ek sluit die navorsing af met 'n bespreking van my eie kreatiewe werk, wat 'n herinterpretasie en kritiese

ondersoek van my grootvader aan moederskant se argief van die laat agtiende-eeu se familie silhoeët portrette. As sodanig, sal ek, in die konteks van die breë knelpunte wat in Kentridge se werk voorkom, die begrippe van subjektiwiteit, menslike waarneming en 'n 'alter-moderne' antropologiese strewe deur 'n persoonlike lens ontleed.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Kathryn Smith for her supervision and to my family for their support.

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Introduction

This thesis seeks to explore the ways in which William Kentridge's use of the visual strategies of European modernism is inextricably linked with his interest in the processes of human perception in his own art practice. The inseparability of these concerns are best exemplified in Kentridge's *I am not me, the horse is not mine* (2008), an installation of eight film fragments that use the visual strategies of animated modernist-styled collages and shadows to explore the fragmented nature of a postmodern postcolonial subjectivity in a South African contemporary cultural context. It is in Kentridge's fascination with the subjective nature of the construction of knowledge, of the space between knowing and seeing, of memory and reality, that *I am not me, the horse is not mine* provides a context in which a history is imagined through past cultural artefacts that remain in the present. Thus my argument will be shaped by theories of altermodernity, neomodern anthropology, the relationship between European modernity and the nineteenth century re-conception of the observer, and the relationship between the look of a subject and the gaze of an object. For this reason, I will use *I am not me, the horse is not mine* as a key visual text to demonstrate the extent to which Kentridge's concern with the fragmented nature of human subjectivity could be regarded as ethnographic and Gothic in nature.

Renowned in the art world for his animated charcoal drawings and for defying the limitations of art media, Kentridge is often hailed as "one of the most compelling interdisciplinary artists of our time" (Cameron 2008). Born in Johannesburg, South Africa in 1955 Kentridge is considered to have used various methods and media within his art practice as a means of coming "to terms with the fragmented and fractured nature of his hometown and country" (Cameron 2008).

In an extract from 'Art in a State of Grace, Art in a State of Hope, Art in a State of Siege', Kentridge (1999: 102) suggests that nineteenth-century artists often distorted their realities by perpetuating the vision of a "benevolent world", a world that was in "a state of grace". According to Kentridge (1999:102), "the state of the world has not changed that much between the late nineteenth century and now in terms of human misery" and in apartheid South Africa "one's nose [was] rubbed in compromises everyday". Consequently Kentridge (1999:102) felt that "this state of grace [was] inadmissible to [him]", that he could not have "managed to maintain an innocence or blindness … without bad faith gnawing at [his] work". Having acknowledged that "good propaganda can come from craft and conscientiousness rather than conviction" (Kentridge 1999: 103), Kentridge found himself "with neither a belief in an attained (even partial) state of grace, nor with a belief in an immanent redemption". This "state of siege" (Kentridge 1999: 103) is evident in Kentridge's earlier work, characterised not only by an openness to the potential for experimentation in art technique, but also by the heavy historical burden of what was then South Africa's present.

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For Kentridge, the central characteristic of life during apartheid was the ease with which one was able to accommodate the disjunctions that presented themselves daily – the "turning from page three horror stories in the newspaper to the sports or arts pages is swift, and bad conscience, if it exists at all, lasts only for a moment" (Kentridge 1999: 104). Having found himself to be "at the edge of huge social upheavals yet also removed from them", the notion of white liberal guilt is a central trope in his work, which he has explored through characters who were neither "active participant[s] nor disinterested observer[s]" (Kentridge 1999: 103). Thus the series of animated charcoal films developed around central protagonists Soho Eckstein and Felix Teitlebaum can, in particular, be regarded as "various excursions around the edge of this position" (Kentridge 1999:103).

Inspired by the grotesque and apocalyptic irony of Goya, Hogarth, Max Beckmann and Otto Dix, Kentridge's art accepts "the existence of a compromised society", but does not "rule out all meaning or value nor pretend that these compromises should be ignored" (Kentridge 1999: 103). As opposition towards the policies of apartheid South Africa grew there was a "growing realisation" that "cultural resistance was a tool of immense power" (Williamson 1989: 8). This is reflected in Kentridge's art practice and, as one of the most well known South African artists working today, he is famously quoted for having said that his work produced during apartheid "marks a spot where optimism is kept in check and nihilism is kept at bay" (Kentridge 1999:103).

Consequently, Kentridge has often been aligned to the twentieth-century "European ideal of the artist as a fully engaged cultural figure" (Cameron 1999: 40)[1]. And, for this reason, he has been regarded as a prominent figure of South African Resistance Art[2]. In contemporary art circles Kentridge has, however, often been criticised for brooding on the "heavy toll of history" (Kimmelman 2008). Both national and international communities have perceived South Africa's unexpectedly smooth transition from apartheid to democracy to be a miracle. Consequently South African artists have often felt the pressure to reflect this miracle by dwelling on the violence of the past. According to Sue Williamson (1996: 7), after South Africa's first democratic election in 1994, however, there was critical pressure to put the past behind one and subsequently 'stuck in the struggle' became a disparaging phrase in the art world. Contemporary South African artists, like Kentridge, continue to address social, political and economic issues, but there are "new feelings of lightness" and, for Williamson (1996:7), this is often reflected in their choice of medium and critical engagement with the conceptual and visual strategies of postmodernism.

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[1] Kentridge's art practice – like many postcolonial artists – attests, however, to irony of the Eurocentric notion that an artist as "a fully engaged cultural figure" is a purely Western phenomenon, that any attempt to make resistant art is simply a conservative translation of the ideals of the past into contemporary society.

[2] Resistance Art is a term coined by Sue Williamson in her 1989 publication *Resistance Art in South Africa*, a book documenting South African art produced during the apartheid years that was "rooted directly in the context of struggle" (Menán du Plessis cited in Williamson 1989: 9), that advocated that there was "no line separating the artist from his [or her] community" (Basil Dube cited in Williamson 1989: 8).

Kentridge is thus, according to Dan Cameron (1999: 38), the first South African artist "to emerge from the post-apartheid era with such a high degree of international exposure", because he is continuously pushing the visual and narrative limits of traditional and contemporary art media. Consequently, Cameron (1999: 38) suggests that to label Kentridge's work as "a kind of running parable of the resistance and post-apartheid era" risks "trivialising his artistic accomplishments". For Cameron (1999: 43) argues, "Kentridge's art is not 'about' apartheid at all" as it is questionable "whether any visual artist working today has the necessary tools to produce representations of vast and complex cultural and/or political issues … we have, for better or worse, long ceased to look towards the visual arts to provide a form of collective moral compass for the rest of society". In an interview with Bronwyn Law-Viljoen, Kentridge (2007: 35) supports this view of Cameron's by stating that "if the concept springs in part from grappling with the stubbornness of inanimate objects, of trying, simply, to find a way to draw a white line, then how does our creating of a political world within that work of art happen?"

For Kentridge (cited in Law-Viljoen 2007: 35), if politics are regarded as "raw material and subject matter, rather than the works themselves being *acts* of politics", the political content of an artwork is thus often created in hindsight. Similarly, in an interview with Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev (1999: 33), Kentridge emphasised how he hated the idea that his work is regarded as having "a clear, moral high ground from which it judges and surveys". He (cited in Christov-Bakargiev 1999: 35) argues that this criticism gives his work a "false authority" because, for him, his work has always been "about a process of drawing that tries to find a way through the space between what we know and what we see" (Kentridge cited in Christov-Bakargiev 1999: 33).

Thus, for Christov-Bakargiev (2009: 110), Kentridge's art practice "proposes a way of seeing art and life as a continuous process of change rather than as a controlled world of certainties". Consequently, in his work, he often explores the ways in which

> perception and experience are transformed into knowledge, the nature of emotions and memory; the relationships between desire, ethics, and responsibility; and the shaping and shifting of subjective identities. His work addresses issues of agency and inaction, public and private, subjugation and emancipation. (Christov-Bakargiev 2009: 110).

All of these themes are explored in Kentridge's *I am not me, the horse is not mine*, a film installation created for the 2008 Sydney Biennale, *Revolutions – Forms That Turn*.[3] *I am not me, the horse is not*

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[3] Curated by Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev (2008: 603), the sixteenth biennale of Sydney put a "greater focus on formal

mine consists of a series of eight film fragments - *A Lifetime of Enthusiasm* (Fig.1), *The Horse Is Not Mine* (Fig.2), *Commissariat for Enlightenment* (Fig.3), *His Majesty the Nose* (Fig.4), *Prayers of Apology* (Fig.5), *That Ridiculous Blank Space Again (A One-Minute Love Story)* (Fig.6), *Country Dances I (Shadow)* (Fig.7), and *Country Dances II (Paper)* (Fig.8) - that are projected simultaneously onto the walls of one room (Fig.9), accompanied by a soundtrack of South African music.[4]

I am not me, the horse is not mine is part of a larger body of work[5] based on Nikolai Gogol's absurdist short story, *The Nose* (1836) and Dmitri Shostakovich's eponymous operatic adaptation (1927-28). *The Nose* is set in czarist Russia and concerns a conceited "petty bureaucrat" (Rosenthal 2009: 60), Major Kvalyov, who awakens one morning to find that his nose is missing from his face. Mortified by his unattractive appearance and rumours of his unfortunate situation, the story follows his attempts to find his nose and convince it to return to his face. In the short time that it has been separated from Kvalyov's face, the nose has, however, acquired a higher social status than its owner and thus it rejects him. Hidden in disguise, the nose attempts to leave St Petersburg but is apprehended by the police and the story concludes with it being inexplicably reunited with the Major's face. Kentridge's interest in the Russian avant-garde has been well documented[6], precisely because it reflects concerns explored in his previous work, particularly notions of complicity in a politically and bureaucratically oppressive apartheid South Africa. Thus *The Nose* not only "concerns the daily pettiness of hierarchical life, but it also describes the ways in which an individual has multiple sides, public and private, that may or may not interlock" (Rosenthal 2009: 60).

In an essay written on *I am not me, the horse is not mine*, included in Rosenthal's *William Kentridge: Five Themes*, Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev (2009: 110) suggests that Kentridge is an important artist, because

> he constantly questions the impact of artistic practice on today's world and has investigated how our identities are shaped through shifting ideas of history and place, looking at how we construct our histories and what we do with them.

She further argues that Kentridge's playful engagement with the Russian avant-garde is important in its relationship with political and social change, with the collapse of revolutionary ideals, and in its exploration of the darker side of Enlightenment (Christov-Bakargiev 2009: 110).

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and aesthetic concerns, on connections between contemporary and historical works, on motifs of reversals and disruptions".

[4] In particular, the soundtrack includes a Zulu chant of "where is my nose, bring me back my nose".

[5] In 2005, Kentridge was invited to stage Dmitri Shostakovich's *The Nose* for the Metropolitan Opera in New York (Rosenthal 2009: 60).

[6] In particular, the relationship between the Russian avant-garde context of *I am not me, the horse is not mine* and its relationship to Kentridge's ongoing concern with European modernism and individual social responsibility has been meticulously discussed by Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev and Mark Rosenthal in essays from *William Kentridge: Five Themes*.

Set in a society where "ideological commitment to a collective cause appeared more important than singular truth", for Christov-Bakargiev (2009: 128), *I am not me, the horse is not mine* questions the relationship between artistic experimentation and intellectual responsibility in society. Christov-Bakargiev (2009: 128) argues that both Gogol and Kentridge's detached Nose is thus symbolic of "the loss of part of ourselves", of "a modernity torn apart … the tearing of language's ability to symbolize and re-present the real", of questioning "the coherence of the body" in an age dependent on technology. She emphasises that denial, the refusal to accept responsibility for one's own actions, "constitutes a form of detachment" in itself, because it involves an "inability to recognize oneself" – it is "an 'I' torn from 'me'", a "phantom limb, violently torn from the body" (Christov-Bakargiev 2009: 128). The circularity implied by both the title of the Sydney Biennale – *Revolutions: forms that turn* - and the title of Kentridge's installation - *I am not me, the horse is not mine* – could thus be regarded as emphasizing the circularity of history. The hope and disillusionment of post revolutionary Russia that Kentridge explores in *I am not me, the horse is not mine*, one could argue, parallels the disillusionment felt by many South Africans today who, almost two decades after the apartheid regime collapsed, are once again facing censorship from their government. Consequently it is the tension between absurdist humour[7] and seriousness that makes his work all the more powerful.

Broadly speaking, however, *I am not me, the horse is not mine* is also significant because, as Christov-Bakargiev (2009: 128) argues, it draws attention to the fact that "at the beginning of the twenty-first century we do not always recognize the fact that postmodern culture was torn away from the twentieth century", that we still have not "fully assessed the body that we are still part of". Named after a Russian peasant proverb that denies guilt of thievery, which Kentridge came across in a Russian trial transcript (Rosenthal 2009: 61), *I am not me, the horse is not mine* is also both a denial of subjectivity and ownership. Thus, for Christov-Bakargiev (2009: 129), the film fragments that make up *I am not me, the horse is not mine*, are not only symbolic of the fragmentation of the revolutionary spirit, but also of the fragmentation of the postmodern self. The Nose, torn from its own body, does not recognise Major Kvalyov, "the whole from which it came", because it does not accept that it was ever separated from him (Christov-Bakargiev 2009: 128). But more importantly, I would argue, the Nose does not accept that it was ever *part* of Kvalyov. Consequently, for Christov-Bakargiev (2009: 128), the recognition of denial and detachment can be cathartic for both society and culture.

Rosenthal (2009: 62) has suggested that in, *I am not me, the horse is not mine*, Kentridge "skates above reality to create a raucous and anarchistic version of events", fighting not only "for a territory

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[7] All though it is not within the scope of this essay to discuss the humorous relationship between postmodernism's conceptual and visual strategies in general, it is interesting to note that Kentridge's installation of *I am not me, the horse is not mine* reflects what Williamson (1996: 7) would call "new feelings of lightness" in post-apartheid South African art.

in which imagination and laughter can co-exist". This points to one of the central concerns in this thesis: that this work creates a territory where modernism and postmodernism can co-exist.

In my first chapter I will thus discuss the way in which Kentridge's use of European modernist visual strategies, particularly in *I am not me, the horse is not mine*, explores the fragmentation of the postmodern subject, and specifically the postcolonial postmodern subject. Using Nikos Papastergiadis's redefinition of the modern 'home', Okwui Enwezor's redefinition of modernity, Nicolas Bourriaud's theories of the altermodern radicant artist, and John and Jean Comaroff's call for a neomodern anthropology, I will thus demonstrate the extent to which *I am not me, the horse is not mine*'s engagement with European modernism is ethnographic in nature.

Chapter 2 will explore the way in which Kentridge's use of shadows investigates the fragmentation of subjectivity in human perception. Consequently, in this chapter, I will draw on Victor Stoichita's history of the shadow, Jonathan Crary's discussion of the relationship between modernity and subjectivity in the invention of nineteenth-century optical devices, and Kaja Silverman's interpretation of Lacan's distinction between the look of the subject and the gaze of the object. In *I am not me, the horse is not mine*, as implied by the title of the work and as will be discussed in the first chapter too, there is also, through Kentridge's use of shadows and quotation of the Dada and Russian Constructivist aesthetic, a play between both the recognition and the denial of a fragmented subjectivity. Consequently, in my second chapter I will also demonstrate the extent to which Kentridge's questioning of subjectivity through the visual strategies of shadow doubling makes *I am not me, the horse is not mine* Gothic in nature.

My final chapter will discuss the influence of questions of subjectivity and the anthropological quest in my own art practice, focusing in particular on a series of nine late eighteenth-century family silhouette portraits as source material. Inherited by my maternal grandfather, Stuart Astley Young, the silhouettes are a shadowy record of family members of whom we know very little except for their names, the dates of their existence and sometimes a few objects that they have been left behind, objects whose passage to my grandfather can be traced on the family tree and through wills of the silhouetted figures. Only three of the silhouettes bear the name of their cutter, Master Hubard and, as we have no paintings of these figures and, cut before the invention of photography, we are simply left with a record of their shadows.

Similarly interested in the relationship between the two-dimensional and the three-dimensional, in my own practical work I have thus been inspired by Kentridge's experimentation with shadows, particularly in the role that they play in human perception and therefore in a personal construction of knowledge. Through the shadows of these unfamiliar family members, the objects that they have left

behind, and by researching late eighteenth-century fashion I have imagined what they would have looked like by creating ceramic busts that, when spot lit, will cast their silhouettes. Based on eighteenth-century Staffordshire sculptural figures, the ceramic busts have been constructed realistically but have been painted illustratively to emphasize that they are products of my imagination, of my ethnographic construction of a personal past. The site of the meeting point between my perception of the past and the shadowy remnant of the reality which cast the silhouettes, and inevitably of the audiences' perception of the sculptures and the reality of the sculptures and their silhouettes as objects, the ceramic busts have thus become an exploration of not only the fragmented relationship between a negative and a positive, but also an exploration of the relationship between the look of the subject and the gaze of the object in the construction of knowledge in my own art practice.

The most significant features linking *I am not me, the horse is not mine* and my own art practice, are the use of shadows and fragmentation as visual and conceptual strategies. In Kentridge, his concern with subjectivity is emphasized by his decision to project the film fragments on the walls of one room, immersing the audience in his work, preventing them from reading *I am not me, the horse is not mine* as an coherent linear narrative. His playfully disruptive, self-reflexive and interactive visual strategies are significant for contemporary art, as I hope to demonstrate in this thesis, precisely because they indicate the potential for a dissolution of the boundary between modernist and postmodernist ideals, between the past and the present. In writings on Kentridge's work, critics and interviewers often emphasise or criticise the Eurocentric nature of his quotation of twentieth-century modernist styles and his experimentation with nineteenth-century optical devices. By focusing on *I am not me, the horse is not mine*, I thus hope to demonstrate that Kentridge's ethnographic concern with European modernism and his Gothic preoccupation with the processes of human perception are in fact inextricably linked in his questioning of subjectivity and the construction of a knowledge of both the past and the present in the twenty-first century.

Chapter 1

An Artist on the Cultural Periphery: an ethnographic concern with modernism

According to Okwui Enwezor (2009: 34), the policy of apartheid was "inextricably bound up with the exercise of control over existence, of individual lives and their existence". Consequently South African artists working during apartheid, like William Kentridge, were often "overwhelmingly preoccupied with the structures of violence and its direct manifestations as part of colonial modernity" (Enwezor 2009: 33). Enwezor further argues that as African modernism has always been located on "the nethermost part of modernism" - a location "not yet modern", and therefore almost "non-existent" - a postcolonial African artist's cultural sphere has been "developed out of oppression and violence and [is] in need of reconciling to modernity" (Enwezor 2009: 38). In light of this argument, it is interesting that Kentridge often uses the visual strategies of the European avant-garde in his own art practice to explore questions of sovereignty and subjectivity in post-apartheid South Africa. However, it is precisely for this quotation of twentieth-century modernist visual strategies in his work, that Kentridge is most often criticised. Consequently, in this chapter I hope to demonstrate the extent to which Kentridge's *I am not me, the horse is not mine*, echoing recent trends in art theory, fights for a territory in which modernism and postmodernism can coexist. In addition to this, by exploring the fragmented nature of the postcolonial postmodern subject, I will argue that Kentridge's quotation of Russian Constructivist and Dada visual aesthetics functions as an ethnographic framing of his concern with subjectivity in *I am not me, the horse is not mine*. This chapter will thus argue that the nature of Kentridge's anthropological quest in his work is an intellectual and artistic, rather than personal, construction of history.

Twentieth-century Western modernity was defined by the belief that the world was fundamentally different from what had passed before, that each person could potentially make history by changing its course. Consequently 'modernism' is a term used by art historians and theorists to describe the art and culture produced in the last century – a period characterised by a variety of movements, stylistic innovations, and the desire to break with the past in order to drive progress forward. According to Arthur C. Danto (1998:7), as the conditions of representation themselves became central art became its own subject. Consequently, by questioning what art is and whose interests it serves, each modern movement developed "out of and in some degrees in reaction against their predecessors" (Danto 1998: 8). Thus art and cultural critique became inextricably linked. According to Suzi Gablik (2004: 21), it was "in the complex transition from modernism into postmodernism" during the 1980s that "a new terrain of consciousness [began to be] occupied – one in which the limits of art seemed to have been reached, and overturning conventions [had] become routine."

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Postmodernism signified that "some momentous historical shift had taken place in the productive conditions of the visual arts" (Danto 1998: 3). Gablik (2004: 21) suggests that this may be because it became "harder and harder to believe in the possibility of yet another stylistic breakthrough, yet another leap into radical form". In the eyes of postmodernism, according to Charles Harrison (1997:9), it is not that modernism is seen to have run its course, but rather that it has "become synonymous with a form of cultural conservatism". In contrast, postmodern contemporary art "has no brief against the art of the past, no sense that the past is something from which liberation must be won, no sense even that it is at all different from modern art generally (Danto 1998: 5)".

For Danto (1998:5), "it is part of what defines contemporary art that the art of the past is available for such use as artists care to give it". Thus defined by what it is not, by a process of negation, postmodernism is often considered to have a parasitic relationship with modernism. For this reason, Danto (1998:15) argues that the paradigm of the contemporary is the notion of appropriation, "the taking over of images [or styles] with established meaning and identity and giving them fresh meaning and identity". As a result, it is within "the phenomena of appropriation" (Virilio 2005: 74) that "modernist styles [have] become postmodernist codes" (Jameson 2001: 17). Contemporary art is regarded as being "less a style of making art than a style of using styles" (Danto 1998: 10). For Frederic Jameson (2001:17), it is due to "the collapse of the high-modernist ideology of style … [that] the producers of culture have nowhere to turn but to the past". 'Real' history is gradually displaced by modernism's "history of aesthetic styles" (Jameson 2001: 20), and consequently contemporary society is "condemned to seek History by way of our own pop images and simulacra of that history, which itself remains forever out of reach" (Jameson 2001: 25). In this situation, Jameson (2001: 17) suggests, "parody finds itself without a vocation … amputated of the satiric impulse, devoid of laughter and of any conviction". All contemporary art is mere pastiche and it is through "stylistic connotation" (2001:19) in "the imitation of dead styles" (2001: 18) that a sense of history, of 'pastness', is conveyed. For this reason, Jameson (2001: 50) suggests that artists cannot keep returning to "aesthetic practices elaborated on the basis of historical situations and dilemmas which are no longer ours".

Kaja Silverman (1996: 195) suggests that since Guy Debord's *Society of the Spectacle*, it has become "fashionable" to claim that we are more dependent on the image – on simulacrum – in the twenty-first century than previous historical periods. This postmodern notion is problematic for Silverman (1996: 195), because she argues that it is "predicated on a radical misrecognition of what is historically variable about the field of vision", because "ever since the inception of cave drawing, it has been via images that we see and are seen". Thus what is specific to our age, Silverman (1996: 195) argues, is not "the specular foundation of subjectivity and the world, but rather the terms of that foundation".

Thus, as Philip Auslander (1999: 32) argues in his *Live Performance in a Mediatized Culture*, our perception of the present has always been determined by the representations of reality with which we have come into contact. Consequently, one could argue, that "aesthetic colonization" (Jameson 2001: 19) in contemporary art is not always a case of pastiche, that is, parody without conviction.

This is emphasised by Nikos Papastergiadis (1996: 96) in his essay, *The Home in Modernity*, which suggests that the "ideal of home is always situated uncomfortably on the cleft stick of tradition and modernisation". Although Papastergiadis questions the notion of 'home' in an era of globalization, it is interesting to use his anthropological theories in relation to contemporary art practice. In a postmodern era, modernism represents "closed traditions" (Papastergiadis 1996: 102) and conservative ideals. Consequently, for many contemporary artists, "to stay there is to atrophy" (Papastergiadis 1996: 102). Twentieth-century Western modernism has become, however, a 'home' for many artists today. It is a period in art history that many artists desperately wish to leave behind, but one to which many find themselves returning. Papastergiadis (1996: 96) attributes this to the fact that the nature of modernity is contradictory for "on the one hand there is the belief that change can makes things better, and on the other we would prefer that things stay as they are".

Consequently, for Papastergiadis, 'home' is not a geographical or historical location, but rather a place where one feels a sense of belonging: 'home' is less of a place than it is a concept in which we invest value. As a result he suggests that leaving home is always a "risky enterprise" (Papastergiadis 1996: 98), because home is the embodiment of culture – a place of safety and order, a place where one is guaranteed to be recognized by others. According to Papastergiadis (1996:100), "our mapping of the world starts with the primary marker of the home" for home is the space in which values and the distinctions between self/other, inside/outside and order/chaos are developed. Thus a return home need not be "a nostalgic retreat to a familiar past nor a defensive reaction against the brutalities of the present" (Papastergiadis 1996: 103), but rather a way of locating oneself in the present, not just the past. This paradoxically emphasises not only the impossibility of being able to return home, but also the impossibility of ever being able to leave home (Papastergiadis 1996: 108). And if, as Papastergiadis (1996: 97) suggests, "home is the centre of the world" then the iconography of the past, of modernism, is central to contemporary art practice.

Despite a "rapidly decentralized art world" (Cameron 1999: 42), this is particularly true for many South African artists today, and for William Kentridge in particular. For Daniel Herwitz, the stylistic uncertainty of South African art has always been inextricably linked with an uncertainty of identity. Modern art, according to Herwitz (1998: 405), arose in Europe and America as a result of urbanisation, capitalisation and nationalism. Thus a "web" (Herwitz 1998: 405) of museums, exhibitions, bourgeois interests and critics turned the west into a "robust art world". As a colony,

however, South Africa's intellectual, cultural, economic and political dependency on Britain during the twentieth century meant that it was always at the margins of modernism (Herwitz 1998: 406). Consequently, for a South African artist, like Kentridge, whose education was "centered on the validity of European culture" (Christov-Bakargiev 1999: 34), it was impossible to be avant-garde when one was always "behind the times" (Herwitz 1998: 406). Forced to "depend on metropolitan models that are never quite their own", Herwitz (1998: 406) suggests, the work of South African artists often reflects the "burden of living at the margins, caught between cultures" (1998: 407) and thus work generated from a South African context often hovers between an imitation of the accepted and an assertion of difference. For Herwitz (1998: 408) this preoccupation with Western modernism, this nostalgic revaluation of the past, denies the social progress that South Africa has undergone. In *Art in a State of Grace, Art in a State of Hope, Art in a State of Siege*, however, Kentridge (1999: 108) questions this criticism, emphasizing the extent to which he has "always envied people working in France at the turn of the twentieth century in their ability to appropriate African iconography, the masks and sculptures, into the formal language of their work without having to deal with the loaded questions that follow." Herwitz (1998: 408) does suggest, however, that if art at the margins of modernism once offered inspiration to Western artists, then it is only fair that today twentieth-century Western modernism serves as a stimulant for contemporary South African artists.

Although the ideals of modernism are ceaselessly "denounced and despised", and the visual strategies are "deconstructed yet untouchable" in contemporary art, modernism thus exists, as Nicolas Bourriaud (2009: 26) suggests, as the shadow of postmodernism. As mentioned in my introduction, finding a territory where modernism and postmodernism can co-exist is, however, a current concern in recent art discourse. For Enwezor and Bourriaud, the concept of modernism is problematic because it has historically been seen not only as a uniquely Western phenomenon, but also as a completed universal project. Consequently, the appearance of twentieth-century modernist aesthetics and ideals in non-Western cultures is often criticised for being a translation of a Eurocentric history, an "export" of Western modernity "slowly spreading outward like a million points of light into the patches of darkness that lie outside its foundational centre" (Enwezor 2009: 27). For Enwezor (2009: 27-28), the postmodern notion that contemporary visual references to European modernism are attempts to ground non-Western contemporary art practice "in traditions of thought and practice" ironically renders European modernism both "a meta-language" and a master narrative of superiority. This, he controversially argues, has resulted in the "majestic petrification", the "museumfication" of European modernity, turning curators and artists into "morticians of modernity", of the historical glories of Europe's "dead past" (Enwezor 2009: 29). It is however, Enwezor argues, important to recognise that "the absence of Pop Art in China in the 1960s is not the same as the absence of 'progressive' contemporary Chinese art" (Enwezor 2009: 30). Thus art practices, however globalized they may

seem, "are also informed by specific epistemological models and aesthetic conditions" (Enwezor 2009: 31).

Consequently, Enwezor proposes an alternative modernity – an 'altermodernity' – which, unlike postmodernism, is not a rejection of modernist ideals or a relocation of the centre of contemporary art, but rather a "dispersal of the universal", a shift of emphasis from the centre to the "off-centre structures of production and dissemination" (Enwezor 2009: 31). In other words, Enwezor argues that in the twenty-first century there is the potential for a variety of modernities and modernisms, influenced by but simultaneously independent of the West. Thus altermodernity is not only a recognition of the "simultaneous existence of multiple centres" (Enwezor 2009: 31), but it is also a significant re-evaluation of what it means to be 'modern'.

For Bourriaud, the concept of altermodernity is also an important re-evaluation of what it means to be 'postmodern'. In a postmodern context, as previously mentioned, modernist artworks are often seen as being "merely the products of the historical conditions in which they appeared" (Bourriaud 2009: 36). But, for Bourriaud (2009: 37), modernist artworks are not simply the products of their time. As they themselves generated effects, they influenced their time and produced history. Consequently, like Enwezor, he argues that the notion of postmodernity being "post-history" is "utopian" and somewhat naïve, for postmodernism is "a hollow concept", "a term whose meaning is purely circumstantial, simply a placeholder to mark the period after modernism" (Bourriaud 2009: 12). The prefix 'post-', has thus "ultimately served simply to lump together multiple versions of that *after*", with "exquisite ambiguity" (Bourriaud 2009: 13). Bourriaud (2009: 13) further argues that "the famed idea of cultural hybridisation, a typically postmodern notion … has proved to be a machine for dissolving any genuine singularity beneath the mask of 'multicultural' ideology".

Where nineteenth and twentieth-century European modernity "was crystallised around the phenomenon of industrialization", Bourriaud argues, "in these early years of the twenty-first century, our ways of seeing and acting have been transformed in a similarly brutal way by economic globalization" (Bourriaud 2009: 17). In his theory of contemporary culture, globalization is simply an "imagined shrinking of the planet … exhausting the imagination" (Bourriaud 2009: 18) of the twenty-first century by "reducing cultural and social reality to Western formats" (Bourriaud 2009:19). Thus, in the face of globalization, one either embraces the conformity of postmodern hybridity, or one retreats into an imagined national or ethnic cultural identity. Consequently, it is through what Bourriaud (2009: 14) calls a "reverse deafness" or a "kind of double negation" that postmodernism has re-established the boundaries between the West and the decolonised, between intellectual disciplines, between subject, object and audience, between modernism and postmodernism. In other words, postmodernism has simply substituted one meta-narrative for another.

For both Bourriaud and Enwezor, however, an important aspect of contemporary art should be to question how one can defend the existence of cultural differences, but simultaneously oppose judging artworks by those differences. Bourriaud (2009: 40) asserts that to answer that question is to either acquiesce to tradition, accepting that each culture generates its own criteria of judgement and must be evaluated by that criteria, or it is "to bet on the emergence of a new system of thought capable of making connections between disparate cultures without denying each one's singularity". For him, it is postmodernism's refusal to answer this question that has made it a "repressive force" in contemporary art (Bourriaud 2009: 40). Consequently, he suggests that the modernity that we face – post-postmodernism – is one that will not duplicate the last century, but one that will echo its problems, because "to believe that things were better before is fundamentally no different from the illusion that they will be better tomorrow" (Bourriaud 2009: 157). Thus, following Enwezor, Bourriaud calls for an 'altermodernity', a 'radicant art' that breaches the divide between history and post-history.

According to Bourriaud (2009: 22), 'radicant' is the term designated to organisms that grow their own roots and add new ones as they advance. Unlike Deleuze and Guattari's postmodern theory of a rhizomatic art practice in which an artist's roots are not only an interconnected, but also an "acentred" system (in O'Sullivan 2008: 12), Bourriaud's altermodernity proposes an artist that sets those roots in motion, and in turn, an art practice that is capable of translating itself "into the terms of the space in which it moves" (Bourriaud 2009: 51). Consequently, it is an art practice that is "caught between the need for a connection with its environment and the forces of [its] uprooting", allowing disparate entities to function together, defining "the subject as an object of negotiation" (Bourriaud 2009: 51).

Altermodernity is therefore a "spiral" vision of the past in which history continually advances only to turn back on itself (Bourriaud 2009: 186). For this reason, Bourriaud's notion of a radicant art cannot function without knowledge of the past, but it is also an art that is continuously enriched by the future. Thus artists who embody this approach do not so much "express the tradition from which they come as the path they take between that tradition and the various contexts they traverse" (Bourriaud 2009: 51). Where twentieth century Western modernism sought to "unearth the root" of art, the twenty-first century altermodern radicant artist seeks to multiply and reconcile their fragmentary roots (Bourriaud 2009: 52). The identity of the radicant artist is therefore "the dynamic form of [their] own wanderings" (Bourriaud 2009: 55), a montage, a "work born of endless negotiation" (Bourriaud 2009: 56), allowing the contemporary artist "to fully inhabit [the age of globalization] instead of merely enduring it or resisting it by means of inertia" (Bourriaud 2009: 52).

Consequently, unlike Deleuze and Guattari, Bourriaud (2009: 55) is prepared to recognise the existence of the subject, albeit a subject that is not "reducible to a stable, closed, self-contained

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identity". Thus, in altermodernity, the 'Other' does not exist because, as Bourriaud (2009: 67) argues, otherness presupposes a constant, definable 'I' to which the 'Other' is compared. In the age of the Internet, of "virtual migrancy" (Van Alphen 2005: 53), of easily accessible information about every civilization and continent, the radicant artist evolves from a "dense chaos of cultural objects", past and present, housed in "the museum of [their] imagination" (Bourriaud 2009: 19). Consequently, for Bourriaud (2009: 113), today's artist is "the prototype of the contemporary traveller … whose passage through signs and formats highlights a contemporary experience of mobility, displacement, crossing". In setting their roots in motion, Bourriaud (2009: 107) argues, the radicant artist employs the methods of "the anthropologist, the archaeologist, the explorer" – intuitively recognising "culture as a toolbox" (Bourriaud 2009: 158), exhibiting, documenting and inventing their discoveries in the past and the present as they unearth them.

Since the 1980s, however, anthropology – the "science of the nature of man" (*Oxford English Dictionary* 2011: Sv. 'anthropology') – and ethnography – "the scientific description of nations or races … with their customs, habits, and points of difference" (*Oxford English Dictionary* 2011: Sv. 'ethnography') – have been regarded as problematic and Eurocentric disciplines. Traditionally concerned with societies other than the ones in which ethnographers lived, ethnography – anthropology's "trusty old analytical toolkit" (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992: x) – has been criticized for making an object of the 'Other', for relying on the "naïve empiricism" of 'seeing is believing' and 'participant observation' (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992: 8). Consequently, the ethnographic quest has often been accused of "fetishizing cultural difference", of speaking *for* the 'Other' and therefore rendering non-Western cultures 'exotic' (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992: 7) – the most well-known of these criticisms being Edward Said's *Orientalism*. For this reason, some may consider Bourriaud's association of the altermodern radicant artist with the discipline of anthropology to be not only problematic, but also paradoxical.

In *Ethnography and the Historical Imagination* anthropologists John and Jean Comaroff (1992: 8) argue, however, that anthropology's "greatest weakness" – making the ethnographic observer his or her own instrument of observation – is also its greatest strength because anthropology "refuses to put its trust in techniques that give more scientific methods their illusory objectivity". Consequently the oxymoronic term 'participant observation' is valuable in the way it "connotes the inseparability of knowledge from its knower" (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992: 8), forcing "us to reflect upon the way in which we ourselves reflect on others" (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992: 45). As a discipline, the Comaroffs (1992: 9) assert, anthropology does not attempt to "speak *for* others, but *about* them". If one accepts that anthropology is a "historically situated mode of understanding historically situated contexts", it follows that an ethnographic study is not only significant in what it has to say about the context of a culture, but also in what it has to say about the context of the ethnographer. Founded on

the basis of observation, anthropology acknowledges that it can "neither imaginatively nor empirically … 'capture'" the reality of different cultures (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992: 9). Instead it attempts to understand the otherness of the 'Other' in order to begin to understand oneself, one's own history and agency. Thus ethnography, and the discipline of anthropology as a whole, is important because it "serves to make the familiar strange and the strange familiar" (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992: 6). Thus it is "a meaningful practice, produced in the interplay of subject and object, of the contingent and the contextual" (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992: 32).

The discipline's "spirit of enquiry" thus forms the basis for "the continuing value of a historical anthropology in which ethnography and culture remain vital … even revitalised" (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992: ix), and it is for this reason that the Comaroffs argue that ethnography, however problematic, is "indispensable to the production of knowledge about all manner of social phenomenon" (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992: xi), grounding "subjective, culturally configured action in society and history" (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992: 11). The self-reflexive nature of anthropology, as Ernst Van Alphen (2005: 3) argues in his *Art in mind: how contemporary images shape thought*, subsequently transforms the "ethnographer-as-authorative-observer into a person who constructs representations of cultures", into an artist.

Thus, like Enwezor and Bourriaud's altermodernity, the Comaroffs' model of a "neomodern anthropology" (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992: ix) is founded on the belief that "the human world, post-anything and -everything, remains the product of discernible social and cultural processes", processes that may be ambiguous and "open to multiple constructions and contests", but are "never utterly incoherent and meaningless" (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992: xi). Consequently, 'neomodern anthropology' regards both the 'traditional' past and the globalized present as a "site for ethnographic inquiry", making one's own present existence strange in order to understand it better (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992: 7). For, as Michel Pastoureau (2008: 13) questions, "if the work of time is an integral part" of an object, and if the "historical reality" of an object "is not only what it was in its original state, but also what time has made of it … why renounce it, erase it, destroy it?" Echoing Bourriaud, the Comaroffs (1992: 30) thus argue that the postmodern demand that one must make a choice between history and the present – in the "confrontation between modernist and postmodern perspectives" – is "misled", because it ignores the "dualistic" nature of reality, something for which anthropology has a great respect. This argument is supported by Van Alphen's (2005: 3) suggestion that although history itself may not alone decide the meaningful or legitimate status of objects, it is because those objects are studied "within parameters of specific historical contexts" that they cannot be placed outside of history.

Consequently, like Bourriaud's altermodern radicant artist, an anthropological quest will begin by "constructing its own archive" – it cannot "content itself with established canons of contemporary

documentary evidence", because these "are themselves part of the culture of global modernism" and are therefore "as much the subject as the means of inquiry" (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992: 34). Thus for both the ethnographer and the radicant artist, cultural texts are "scattered shards from which we presume worlds … anchored in the processes of their production" (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992: 34). Thus, like Enwezor and Bourriaud's theory of the altermodern, the Comaroff's theory of neomodern anthropology "takes seriously the message of critical postmodernism" but "by grappling with the contradictions of its own legacy" it seeks to "transcend" those contradictions (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992: 45). Subsequently, as Bourriaud argues (echoing Enwezor), it becomes possible "to reclaim the concept of modernity" without embracing universalism, radicality, progress and the ideals of the avant-garde (Bourriaud 2009:15). For, as he humorously explains:

> At the end of the 1970s, when the modernist engine stopped … the postmodernists walked around the vehicle, deconstructed its mechanics, broke it down to spare parts, and formed theories regarding the nature of the breakdown before strolling off into the surrounding area and announcing that everyone was now free to walk however they liked, in what ever direction they choose. (Bourriaud 2009: 93).

The radicant artist, however, intends to "remain in the car", travelling "in the same direction as modernity", but "operating their vehicle according to the reliefs they encounter and with the aid of a different fuel" (Bourriaud 2009: 93). Consequently, for both Bourriaud and Enwezor, being 'modern' does not mean ignoring the poststructuralist and postmodern criticisms of modernity. Instead, being 'modern' means

> daring to seize the occasion … it means *venturing*, not resting contentedly with tradition, with existing formulas and categories; but seeking to clear new paths, to become a test pilot … to call into question the solidity of things, to practice a generalized relativism, a critical comparatism unsparing of the most tenacious certainties, to perceive the institutional and ideological structures that surround us as circumstantial, historical, and changeable at will. (Bourriaud 2009: 16).

A preoccupation with twentieth-century European modernism has always been evident in the work of William Kentridge and he does not deny that art movements like German Expressionism, Dada and Russian Constructivism have often influenced him directly. In an interview with Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev (1999:9), Kentridge suggests that, in quoting various modernist movements and artists, there is often an element of wishing "to live in a different place and time, closer to the centre" of the art world. According to Kentridge (cited in Christov-Bakargiev 1999:10), "much of what was contemporary in Europe and America during the 1960s and 1970s seemed distant and

incomprehensible", because the changes occurring in art practice were only available to South African artists in the documentation of international exhibitions[8]. Thus, for Kentridge (cited in Christov-Bakargiev 1999:14), the work of the Abstract Expressionists and Conceptual artists appeared too apolitical, too removed from the reality of Apartheid South Africa – early postmodernism seemed as immediate and local to Kentridge as early twentieth-century European art. The work of a postcolonial artist, like Kentridge, may indeed share the visual strategies of European modernism but, as Enwezor (2009: 33) argues for artists on the margins of modernism, it is work "made with an awareness of, and in response to, specific historical conditions".

One could subsequently argue that, as an artist on the "cultural periphery", as Christov-Bakargiev refers to him (1999: 10), Kentridge's references to high modernist movements may be nostalgic, but they are never pastiche (parody without conviction). For Kentridge, each quotation is symbolically relevant; what Bourriaud would call setting one's roots, and the signs with which one has come into contact, into motion. Consequently Kentridge's use of modernist visual strategies can be regarded as a response to "specific historical conditions" (Enwezor 2009: 33) – the postcolonial and postmodern status of South African art and artists – and not simply an attempt to ground his work in Western "traditions of thought and practice" (Enwezor 2009: 27).

Herwitz (1998: 408) has argued that where South African art was once defined by the conservative exoticism of its colonial past and by the liberal morality of its resistance to Apartheid, post-Apartheid art is defined by a reaching out toward other cultures, toward a freedom of expression. In *I am not me, the horse is not mine*, not only are the concepts of modernism and postmodernism subjects of Kentridge's visual ethnographic enquiry, but the political and cultural idealism of the European avant-garde and South Africa's wavering democracy too. Specifically, it is towards the historical context of the European avant-garde that Kentridge reaches in order to understand his own cultural context as a postcolonial postmodern South African artist. This is emphasized most particularly by the juxtaposition of the Russian visual references (archival footage and animated Constructivist collages) in *I am not me, the horse is not mine* with South African music, and in particular a Zulu chant that repeatedly asks, "where is my nose; bring me back my nose" (Rosenthal 2009: 62).

Although a commonplace visual strategy nowadays, the collage aesthetic was, according to Brandon Taylor (2006: 8), a radical development in avant-garde art during the twentieth century because it took an "anthropological interest" in the discarded fragments of modernity. Collage involved a self-reflexive questioning of the limits of "aesthetic decency" by pasting an object to a surface "where it does not strictly belong" in order to create new meaning through an "illicit" coupling (Taylor 2006:

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[8] Christov-Bakargiev (1999:14) attributes this to the fact that in the aftermath of the 1976 Soweto riots, South Africa became progressively isolated from the international art world due to sanctions.

8). Consequently, in high modernist movements like Dada and Russian Constructivism, the collage aesthetic became ideological and highly politicized (Taylor 2006: 33). According to Russian Constructivist Gustav Klutsis (cited in Taylor 2006: 35), the photograph is often not seen as the "drawing of a visual fact but the exact fixation of it". Consequently Russian Constructivist photomontages, in particular, exploited the "precision and documentary quality" of the photograph in order to give their collages the "power to influence the viewer" in a way that "the drawn image is never able to attain" (Klutsis cited in Taylor 2006: 35).

Kentridge's exploration of the Russian avant-garde is most visually evident in his use of the collage aesthetic in the film fragments that make up *I am not me, the horse is not mine*. Consequently, *I am not me, the horse is not mine* consists of fragments made up of fragments. He playfully engages with collage and the avant-garde exploitation of the photomontage's claim to reality in his *Country Dances II (Paper)* (Fig.8), a film fragment in which the figures of the shadow dancer in *Country Dances I (Shadow)* (Fig.7) is echoed by a figure collaged from pages of Russian encyclopaedias. For Christov-Bakargiev (2009: 126), the animated dancing figures not only "celebrate[s] the energy and possibilities of modernist collage", but their gradual disintegration also draws attention to the process of abstraction and misunderstanding, to the "the schism between truth and language", in periods of revolutionary political and social upheaval. Similarly, in the film fragment *Commissariat for Enlightenment* (Fig.3), Kentridge experiments with moving photomontages, combining footage of himself working in his studio with a variety of Russian archival footage - Stalinist celebrations, Shostakovich playing the piano, scenes from Vertov's 1928 *Man with a Movie Camera* and so on – through which the shadowy figure of the Nose travels.

It is in Klutsis's use of the phrase 'influence the viewer', as noted above, that one can see the extent to which the ideological basis of Russian Constructivism differed radically to that of Dada. Where Dada glorified nonsense and anarchy, Russian Constructivism strove towards an ultimately functional art that served the artist's society. Christina Lodder (1987: 1) attributes this "radical reassessment of artistic activity" in early twentieth-century Russian art to the utopian aspirations of the Russian Revolution and the Civil War that followed. Consequently, unlike Dada, Constructivism was not simply "a movement primarily concerned with aesthetics", but rather a movement that viewed their artists as "active participants in the process of social and political transformation" (Lodder 1987: 1). Thus, as an art movement, Russian Constructivism not only identified with the new social and political order, but also was seen to play an important role in visually constructing the future of Russia (Lodder 1987: 2). Consequently, it is in quoting a variety of film footage from the period in *Commissariat for Enlightenment* (Fig. 3) that Kentridge's visual strategies once again emphasize the extent to which modernism's artefacts, its fragments, transcend the moment of their creation.

Broadly speaking, *I am not me, the horse is not mine* thus explores the way which Russian Constructivism's idealised visual language embodied its artists' belief in and commitment to the hegemonic communist project of Soviet Russia. In refusing to separate avant-garde filmmaking from communist ideology, Kentridge (cited in Frieling 2009: 168) thus emphasizes that Russian Constructivist aesthetics were "dependent on the strength of [those] beliefs". *A Lifetime of Enthusiasm* (Fig. 1) is, in particular, a film fragment that addresses the construction of enthusiasm and energy during the years of the Russian Revolution. Kentridge depicts a shadowy procession of people, the Nose and his horse, and various communication apparatus, dragging Vladimir Tatlin's iconic (yet unrealised) design for a 400-metre-high communication tower known as the *Monument to the Third International* (1919). Considered the father of Russian Constructivism, Tatlin's monument has been historically regarded as a symbol of both the movement and its hope in Soviet Russia's revolutionary ideals. As the fragment opens with a figure enthusiastically waving a red flag that gradually disintegrates, Kentridge's *A Lifetime of Enthusiasm* also, however, delegates Tatlin's vision as a monument for revolutionary disillusionment.

This is most evident by comparing *A Lifetime of Enthusiasm* with *Prayers of Apology* (Fig.5), a film fragment that explores how the success of a political regime often relies on the extent to which its well-intentioned ideology disappears into the domain of totalitarian hegemony. In his research for Shostakovich's *The Nose*, Kentridge came across a Russian trial transcript – the 'Plenum of the Central Committee of February 26, 1937' – in which a former Russian operative, Nikolai Bukharin, is interrogated by Stalin and other members of the Central Committee (Rosenthal 2009: 61). A Lieutenant of Lenin, an early member of the Communist Party and one of its leading theoreticians, Bukharin became a member of the Central Committee in 1918 (Christov-Bakargiev 2009: 125). For Christov-Bakargiev (2009: 125), his story "expresses the self-destruction of the Bolshevik party", because it was due to the fact that Bukharin remained loyal to the party throughout the purges that he was unable to defend himself against the accusations of the Central Committee in 1937. Thus, for Kentridge (cited in Christov-Bakargiev 2009: 125), the tragedy of Bukharin's situation lies "in the impossibility of reconciling his need to believe in the party and the cause to which he had given all his life" with "the new world of illogic … which he had embraced for the sake of his party". This event becomes the subject of *Prayers of Apology*, a film fragment in which excerpts from the trial transcript are simply written in white on a black background.

Pleading his innocence in a crumbling self-defence Bukharin finally declares, "No one believes in human feelings any more" – a comment that is met with laughter in *Prayers of Apology*. Christov-Bakargiev (2009: 125) suggests that the film fragment thus emphasises the "theatricality of a staged trial" and the subsequent "inversion of logic" that occurs in a situation where "language is severed from truth", for ideological commitment to a collective cause is more important than truth under a

totalitarian regime (Christov-Bakargiev 2009: 128). It is in its visual simplicity and quietness that *Prayers of Apology* renders the trial even more absurd than the antics of the Nose in Kentridge's other film fragments, consequently it gives *I am not me, the horse is not mine* its critical weight, what Mark Rosenthal (2009: 61) calls its "Gogolian world of paranoia, frantic bewilderment, and unalloyed pathos".

For Rosenthal (2009: 61), *I am not me, the horse is not mine* is a "stream-of-consciousness depiction" of *The Nose* and Russian history, a strategy that demonstrates a "more intuitive approach" in Kentridge's most recent work, an approach that "embraces chaos" by privileging multiple layers and view points over narrative sequence. According to Rosenthal (2009: 60), Gogol's short story was based on a Russian translation of Laurence Sterne's *Life and Opinions of Tristam Shandy, Gentleman* (1759), which was in turn inspired by Miguel de Cervantes's *Don Quixote* (1605). Consequently, the two central figures in Kentridge's *I am not me, the horse is not mine* – the Nose and the horse – embody the literary lineage behind Shostakovich's opera. Often appearing on horseback with an "irreverent" attitude towards authority, rank and decorum, the character of the Nose becomes a comic and absurd "monument" to anarchy (Rosenthal 2009: 60). This is playfully explored in *The Horse Is Not Mine* (Fig.2), a visually resonant film fragment in which the shadowy figures of the Nose and his faithful steed – both collaged from torn fragments of black paper – mount a plinth to wave the red flag of communism. They are however confronted by a Russian Constructivist styled megaphone that verbally overpowers them, reducing them to a pile of disintegrated fragments.

As I mentioned in the introduction, twentieth-century modernity was a "structure with a dark core". Despite valorising democracy and individual liberty, it emphasized and imposed the "master and slave dialetic" politically, economically and socially (Enwezor 2009: 34). For Enwezor (2009: 34), this resulted in a "fundamental relationship between modernity and violence". Consequently Kentridge's references to the Russian avant-garde, in a post-Apartheid South African context, is important in its exploration if the darker side of Enlightenment – in its relationship with political and social change, with the collapse of revolutionary ideals and the abuse of power.

It is therefore not surprising that the elements of collage and "anarchic energy" of *I am not me, the horse is not mine* are also regarded as showing "a clear debt to Dada" (Spence 2008), an avant-garde movement which has been critically regarded as exposing and satirising the hypocrisies and pretensions of twentieth-century bourgeois society. Although Dada was "unsympathetic to Constructivist ideals", the two movements were often discussed together in reviews and criticisms of the period, because they were seen to have "shared a commitment to collage and photomontage" (Taylor 2006: 59). Dada, however, originally "had no theory other than its own love of nonsense" (Taylor 2006: 38). Inspired by the "political madness" (Taylor 2006: 37) of the World Wars, Dada

embraced absurdity, chaos and anarchy. These elements are most obvious in Kentridge's *His Majesty The Nose* (Fig.4), a film fragment in which the Nose attempts to climb a ladder to make an announcement, but each time he collapses into fragments of torn black paper, "endlessly … crushed by ambition" (Christov-Bakargiev 2009: 125).

Similarly *That Ridiculous Blank Spot Again (A One-Minute Love Story)* (Fig. 6) embraces the absurdity of Dada in a world torn apart by violence. Based on a short story by Daniil Kharms, a Russian writer who died of starvation in a Leningrad prison in 1941, Kentridge animates two Russian Constructivist collages – a red wedge representing communism attempting to defeat a white circle representing capitalism – that meet, part, return to beat each other, part again, and return morphed as one form, continuing until one finally drags the other off screen. For Christov-Bakargiev (2009:127), this projection depicts "the underside of political and social utopias", the "cruelty, absurdity, and lack of logic in human behaviour and relations". The seriousness of the content is, however, diminished by the visual absurdity of the film fragment and its title. Consequently, one could argue that this particular fragment embodies the avant-garde struggle between Russian Constructivist and Dada ideals – between function and form, between playing and criticising.

For Kentridge (cited in Spence 2008), the absurdity of Dada is "at times … the most accurate way of describing parts of the world. Where logic breaks down, where systems of understanding no longer apply, one needs something that demonstrates that incoherence". For Mark A. Pegrum (2000: 170), Dada's replacing of "the traditional either/or dichotomy … with an initially both/and situation", suggests that "nothing, … and equally, nothing Dada says – is black or white: or rather everything is both black and white" (Pegrum 2000: 170). Pegrum (2000: 311) does emphasise, however, that as an avant-garde movement "the Dadaists, above and beyond their negativism and attacks on contemporary society, always retain[ed] an optimistic sense that the world can be changed, renewed, remade". For this reason, a central principle in Dada was the "regenerating force of life as flux" (Pegrum 2000: 311) and this notion is reflected in Kentridge's *I am not me, the horse is not mine*, an installation that consists of a series of looped projections that echo each other in content and form, emphasizing that history is simply "repetition with difference" (Taylor 2008: 614).

Dada wanted to destroy art, but – as Sylvère Lotringer (2005: 60) reminds us – like postmodernists "they wanted to do it *as artists*". Consequently, it is important to Kentridge (in Spence 2008) that his work "starts with Dada but it doesn't end with Dada". Continuously in the process of creating and destroying the image, the film fragments of *I am not me, the horse is not mine* balance chaos and order, disintegration and reintegration, incoherence and coherence. Together, however, they in themselves become a moving photomontage of Kentridge's ethnographic enquiry into the relationship between European modernism and postmodernism, between Western history and South Africa's past

and present. Kentridge's *I am not me, the horse is not mine* film fragments thus embody the fact that if history is simply a "repetition with difference" (Taylor 2008: 614), and that if "the future was an idea of the past", one should be able to "travel backwards to re-imagine it" (Christov-Bakargiev 2008: 32).

It has never been Kentridge's intention to produce work that says "this is how the world is constructed" or for "others to be made wiser by this revelation" (Kentridge cited in Christov-Bakargiev 1999: 31). Kentridge (1999: 104) believes that, for an artist, "the greatest danger of a completed narrative" is the fact that the finality of the story often alienates its viewer. For this reason Kentridge (1999: 117) suggests that it is important to distinguish between the needs of an artist as a producer of an artwork and the needs of a viewer as an audience to that artwork. Thus, inspired by the great narrative works of Beckmann and Goya, Kentridge's work has often been characterised by incoherency, by a sense of "incompletion or awkwardness" (Kentridge 1999: 104). One might feel that a film stops where it should continue, that one is faced with a riddle that has no answer, but if "gaps are left for the viewer to bridge" (Kentridge 1999: 105) then one is able to involve oneself in Kentridge's playful experimentation with various art media. Consequently, for Kentridge (cited in Christov-Bakargiev 1999: 34), ambiguity and contradiction in art prevents the artist from being "so utterly convinced of the certainty of one's own solutions" and the ambivalent nature of meaning in his art allows for the viewing of them to become an interactive process between the artist and his audience. Thus Kentridge's art practice could be regarded as a mediation of meaning "between the perceptions of the outside world and the visions of the artist's imagination" (Guercio 2007: 43).

In its intertextuality and concern with the subjective nature in which one constructs knowledge of the world, *I am not me, the horse is not mine* can thus be regarded as playfully engaging with the postmodern "desacrilization of the author" (Barthes 1977: 144). In his infamous poststructuralist essay 'The Death of the Author', Roland Barthes (1977: 143) questioned the extent to which "the explanation of a work is always sought in the man or woman who produced it". In *I am not me, the horse is not mine* one can see Kentridge in the film footage climbing a ladder in his studio, consequently the artist's presence could be regarded as an ironic symbol of "the voice of the 'author confiding' in us" (Barthes 1977: 143), the symbol of Kentridge's 'authentic' artistic expression and his studio symbolic of the space in which his 'genius' is developed, in which his 'authentic' artworks are created. Kentridge's studio has often been an important emblem in his work, and the most well-known example of this is perhaps *Journey to the Moon* (Fig.10). One of a series of narrative films, *7 Fragments for Georges Méliès*, created as a both homage to the early filmmaker and various reflections on the studio as a subject, *Journey to the Moon* is about the artist's attempt "to escape the confines of the studio" (Kentridge 2009: 13). Ironically, and somewhat poetically, the studio becomes

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the artist's rocket to the moon. Thus the studio space is simultaneously both the means of his confinement and of his escape.

Both *Invisible Mending* (Fig.11) and *Balancing Act* (Fig.12), two other films from the *7 Fragments* series, are echoed in *His Majesty The Nose* through Kentridge's use of a ladder, his studio space and the Nose as a döppelganger figure of the artist. In *Invisible Mending* Kentridge plays with the subject-object relationship between an artist and an artwork for he appears as the artist, the model and the artwork in his studio. In *Balancing* Act, a physical ladder becomes the potential means of escape from both the studio and the artist's fragmented subjectivity, but as in *His Majesty The Nose* (Fig.4), it gradually becomes animated itself, it collapses taking the artist with it. The studio is a space where the "many possible trajectories" (Kentridge 2009: 13) of an artwork are tested and explored. Consequently, for Kentridge (2009: 13), "the studio is an enclosed space, not just physically but also psychically, like an enlarged head", an enlarged version of the artist's mind and its processes. Thus, if "the studio is the traditional home of the image", an artwork that is about the studio is undeniably "about both the activity and the history of image making" (Kentridge 2009: 13). Consequently, for Kentridge, the studio can be regarded as "the subject but also the canvas" (Kentridge 2009: 13).

Whether Kentridge consciously engages with postmodern interrogations of authority and subjectivity or not, the traces of the artist's process – whether it is visible charcoal marks from a previous drawing or his physical appearance in projections like *Commissariat For Enlightenment* (Fig.3) – prevent one "from overlooking the presence of the artist" (Boris 2001: 32). One could argue that, in his preoccupation with modernism, Kentridge's art is merely a "tissue of quotations" (Barthes 1977: 146). It is, however, how these quotations are "inscribed" (Barthes 1977: 147) in his work and on his audience that make his art practice innovative, that prevents it from simply being another modernist mediation on what it is to represent something. Kentridge's work, his engagement with the perceptions of his viewers, is thus, like Bourriaud's altermodernity and the Comaroffs' neomodern anthropology, indebted to the re-evaluation of authority and meaning that took place during early postmodernism.

Consequently it would be short-sighted to simply label *I am not me, the horse is not mine* a Eurocentric modernist "deconstruction of the very aesthetic of expression" (Jameson 2001: 11), equating Kentridge's use of twentieth-century modernist visual strategies with the ideals that they once represented. Instead it is an attempt "to unravel the meanings and motivations behind the political and artistic impulses to revolt and to be 'avant-garde'" (Christov-Bakargiev 2009: 112). For Christov-Bakargiev (2009: 116), it is thus in his celebration of "the leftover, the shadow, the trace, the discarded, the unproductive, the doubt, the unresolved, the uncertain" that Kentridge's art is able to

stand apart from European modernism's quest for "the absolute essence of art". As a contemporary artwork it therefore engages with the altermodern vision of art for, in *I am not me, the horse is not mine*, the context is not only rooted in a variety of cultures, but as the looped film fragments are always in a process of becoming, Kentridge sets those roots in motion. Kentridge's art practice, Jonathan Crary (2008: 44) argues, is thus significant precisely because it recognizes that although art may no longer be able to "produce social change" it still has the power to "continually provide unfamiliar vantage points from which the apparent necessity of dominant perceptual and cognitive habits can be unsettled or dismantled".

Chapter 2

A Space between Knowing and Seeing: a Gothic concern with the processes of perception

According to Okwui Enwezor (2009: 33), "there remain some boundaries between the locations of contemporary artistic practice and the historical production of modern subjectivity", precisely because "these boundaries are tied up with the unfinished nature of the project of modernity". In producing the effects of reality rather than representations of reality, twentieth-century European modernism was not just a reaction against or an attempt to transcend the processes of scientific and cultural rationalization but, for Jonathan Crary (1992: 96), it was also inseparable from them. Owing to questions about the objectivity of human vision and technological developments in the optical field, vision became "the dominant sense in the modern world" (Jay 1994: 44), in human perception. Consequently, Crary (1992: 76) argues that "the interlacing of scientific and aesthetic discourse about vision is essential to an understanding of modernity and the observer", of European modernism and contemporary art. Nineteenth-century research into binocular vision and the effects of retinal after-images, in particular, affected the Cartesian ideal of a coherent, disembodied and monadic subject because, in the fusion of vision and "remembered perception" (Crary 1992: 100), temporality and biology became "an inescapable component of observation" (Crary 1992: 98). Thus, from the nineteenth century, the act of seeing became synonymous with "the shifting processes of one's own subjectivity experienced in time" (Crary 1992: 98) and the body, previously invisible in philosophy, was understood to be "the thickness from which knowledge of the observer [and the shifting processes of their subjectivity] was obtained" (Crary 1992: 150).

 In a century where human vision is once again increasingly disembodied by technological developments, it is significant that the fragmentation of subjectivity is central to William Kentridge's art practice, particularly in his concern with the role of European modernity and the processes of human perception in the construction of knowledge. Although Kentridge does not directly quote a nineteenth-century optical device in *I am not me, the horse is not mine*, the visual strategies used in the various film fragments, particularly in his experimentation with the indirect gaze of shadows, reflect his preoccupation with the processes of perception. Consequently, in this chapter I will discuss Kaja Silverman's interpretation of the role of Lacan's 'gaze' in the formation of a coherent sense of selfhood, and subsequently demonstrate the extent to which the denial of this coherence in Kentridge's visual strategies make *I am not me, the horse is not mine* Gothic in nature.

For Sylvère Lotringer (2005: 57), "'modernity' lay in the changing times, not in the arts which tried to express them". For Lotringer, like Crary, it is important to recognise that art is symptomatic of its time. This is also emphasised by Paul Virilio, who maintains that a catastrophe has occurred in the arts, because we have not taken into account the impact of the machine on perception in the twenty-first century. For Virilio (2005: 58), the "motorization of the image" in photography, film and television had a significant impact upon the "plastic" arts, to the extent that traditional art media – like sculpture, painting and printmaking – have become "synonymous with static". Thus, as in modernism, contemporary art is "faced with the reconstruction of the phenomenology of perception according to the machine", not just a change in optics or style (Virilio 2005: 66). He further argues that we have lost our will to machines, for it is to machines that we have transferred "the power of perception, the power of acquisition and the power of decision" (Virilio 2005: 99). For Virilio (2005: 67), the distancing of events, sensations, and perceptions from the individual that has been caused by the mechanization of society remains the primary challenge of representation faced by artists today. Recalling Napoleon's famous statement, "To command is to speak to the eyes" (cited in Virilio 2005: 73), Virilio insists that today it is the machine that speaks to the eyes; it is the machine that commands the way that humans perceive the world.

Indeed, for Friedrich A. Kittler (1999: 1), in the face of virtual technology, human senses are no longer distinct. Machines have dominated our perception to such an extent that it is often difficult to determine where reality ends and representation begins. Due to an overexposure to 'live' media broadcast, our concept of time – of the past, present and future – is often determined solely by the 'present'. Philip Auslander (1999: 32) attributes this to the fact that "we often perceive reality only through the mediation of machines". Thus, Auslander argues, our perception of reality has in fact always been determined by the representations of reality with which we have come into contact.

According to Crary (1992: 1), the rapid developments in computer graphic technology have thus resulted in a "reconfiguration of the relations between an observing subject and the modes of representation" in the twenty-first century by undermining the "culturally established meanings of the terms *observer* and *representation*" and severing vision from the human observer. In his *Techniques of the Observer: on Vision and Modernity in the 19th Century*, Crary (1992: 3) argues, however, that the "problems of vision" had already begun to redefine the status of the observing subject in the nineteenth century. In art history, as discussed in the first chapter of this thesis, the changes that took place in avant-garde art are often attributed to a 'new' kind of observer that emerged in Europe during the nineteenth century. For Crary (1992: 6) this is a problematic generalisation, because human perception is not independent of history. For him, modernity did not result in the transformation of the observer, but rather in a transformation of nineteenth century "social practices and domains of knowledge" in which that observer would have operated (Crary 1992: 7). This is echoed by Gertrude

Stein's (2008: 158) argument that "the only thing that is different from one time to another is what is seen and what is seen depends upon how everybody is doing everything", for people both compose and are "composition[s] of the time in which they are living". Consequently, for Crary (1992: 5), the history of perception does not depend on the history of the aesthetic developments that took place in European modernism beginning with nineteenth century Impressionism, but rather on the nineteenth-century "phenomenon of the observer" being understood as both the product and site of "subjectification".

Crary (1992: 110) acknowledges that the role that nineteenth-century optical devices played in the reconstruction of the modern observer have been well documented, but "almost exclusively in the service of the history of cinema". For Crary (1992: 26) the art historians' attempts "to pose an ever-increasing progress toward verisimilitude in representation, in which Renaissance perspective and photography are part of the same quest" for "an objective equivalent" of human vision is, however, problematic. Crary (1992: 26) argues that to equate photography with an "evolved camera obscura" is not only to "assume that an observer's relation to the world remains the same", but it also arrogantly renders each development in nineteenth-century optical devices and modernism an inadequate version of photography (Crary 1992: 32). This is emphasised by Barbara Maria Stafford in the catalogue for the J.P Getty Museum's exhibition, *Devices of Wonder*. For Stafford (2001: 1), the museum's installation of optical devices from the curiosity cabinet to the cinema demonstrates the extent to which "no medium is ever completely replaced by another", because in each technological advancement lurks "the ghosts" of previous optical devices. And, for Crary, optical devices are also individually significant because each scientific development was in itself a re-destabilization of the transcendental foundation of vision privileged in Western thought by the Renaissance.

Viewed by Renaissance artists and philosophers – most emblematically by Descartes – as an objective machine that could replicate human vision and accurately capture reality, the camera obscura was, for over two hundred years, a "philosophical metaphor" for explaining the relationship between the perceiving subject and the world (Crary 1992: 29). Based on Renaissance perspective principles, the camera obscura's "cone of vision" rendered the observer a monadic subject – a disembodied, transcendental beholder of a framed world (Crary 1992: 53) with a monocular and "unblinking fixed eye" (Jay 1994: 54). In comparison to the Renaissance, modernity had "radically different notions of what an observer was, and of what constituted vision" (Crary 1992: 27) because nineteenth century philosophers, scientists and artists soon began to regard the camera obscura as being anything but "an inert and neutral piece of equipment" (Crary 1992: 27). For it is in using an optical device, Crary (1992: 40) argues, that one becomes an organizer, a stager of an apparatus from whose functioning one is physically distinct. In other words, as John and Jean Comaroff argued in their re-evaluation of the role of anthropology in the face of postmodernism, no matter how

empirically objective an optical device may seem to be, it is the observer who controls how the world is framed, and in turn, how reality is represented.

As Martin Jay (1994: 14) argues in his *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought*, in "the history of Western attitudes towards sight" there is often a "profound suspicion" of vision in philosophical, scientific and artistic discourses. Thus although the verisimilitude of perspectival construction may have persisted in the nineteenth century, it was radically "severed from the scientific base that had once authorized it" (Crary 1992: 86), allowing nineteenth-century artists to claim "for the eye a vantage point uncluttered by the weight of historical codes and conventions of seeing, a position from which vision can function without the imperative of composing its contents into a reified 'real' world" (Crary 1992: 96).

And thus European modernism was both visually and culturally "a laboratory of post-perspectivalist optical experimentation" (Jay 1994: 170). It was in the nineteenth century that vision became the object of observation itself (Crary 1992: 70) and each development in optical technology rapidly demonstrated and emphasized the extent to which visual perception is embodied in the viewer, "inseparable from the muscular movements of the eye and the physical effort of focusing" one's attention on an object (Crary 1992: 72). Nineteenth-century research on vision was thus dominated by the "inseparability of psychology and biology" (Crary 1992: 73), by a subject who was "both the site and producer of sensation" (Crary 1992: 75). Optical devices have never been mere frames of our existence, as Stafford (2001: 115) concludes, but are "extensions of our being", allowing people to see "how their limited actions are connected to a wider environment and how personal order … is not arbitrary but rather emerges from what we do".

Developed for scientific purposes, optical devices thus played an important role in European modernity's reconstruction of subjectivity, precisely because they often became forms of mass entertainment and therefore reached a wider audience. The stereoscope, for example, was developed to explore the mechanics and potentials of human binocular vision, but became the "dominant form for the consumption of photography" (Crary 1992: 16). Similarly, invented by scientists to explore the effects of retinal after-images phenakistiscopes and zootropes, were enjoyed by the public as early forms of pictorial animation, while "some of the most important improvements" to the microscope were made by amateur scientists (Terpak 2001: 208). Preoccupied with both the defects and the "capacities of the human eye" – binocular and peripheral vision, retinal after-images and so on – nineteenth-century optical devices thus transformed human vision and attention into something that was not only measurable, but also had the potential to be manipulated. Consequently optical devices developed during the nineteenth century are significant, because they are the "points of intersection" (Crary 1992: 8) where the re-evaluation of the objectivity of human vision in philosophical, scientific

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and aesthetic discourses overlapped (Crary 1992: 14). And indeed, it is for this reason that nineteenth-century optical devices have become both a central metaphor and visual strategy for exploring the role of the artist, as both the site and producer of the construction of knowledge, in Kentridge's art practice.

For Dan Cameron (1999: 57), it is the result of Kentridge's "profound misgivings concerning both his chosen vocation and the passivity of his position as spectator" in relation to South Africa's past that "the sustained act of looking, the archetypal gaze, [has become] such a crucial motif" (Cameron 1999: 68) in his art practice. The most reproduced literal examples of this motif are perhaps the pair of eyes reflected in a rear-view mirror in *The History of the Main Complaint* (Fig. 13) or the colonial land surveying equipment through which Nandi and Felix Teitlebaum view each other in *Felix in Exile* (Fig. 14). For Kentridge, however, what one chooses to represent in the world has always been as valuable as how one chooses to represent it. As in European modernism, the means of representation often become the objects of representation in Kentridge's art practice. When questioned about the prevalence of references to late nineteenth-century photography and film in the set design of *Magic Flute*, for example, Kentridge (cited in Law-Viljoen 2007: 38) suggested that "what we do when we look through a camera lens" can be regarded "as a metaphor for what we do when we look through our own lives": we may "understand the artificial nature of looking through a camera, but we don't understand the unnatural activity of looking when we are just *looking*, how when we look it is not simply a matter of the world coming into us, but it is us constructing the natural world as we understand it" (Kentridge cited in Law-Viljoen 2007: 38).

As I argued in the first chapter, Kentridge's work is not merely a modernist meditation on what it is to represent something. Instead it is about the artificial construction of an image, the processes of human perception. His references to and experimentation with the optical devices of the nineteenth century – for example stereoscopes (Fig.15), perspective theatres (Fig.16), anamorphic drawings (Fig.17) and phenakistiscopes (Fig. 18) – thus offer a filter through which the world might be newly grasped, "imbuing the viewer with a degree of self-consciousness regarding sight and its need for mediation" (Rosenthal 2009: 59).

Consequently, as Cameron (1999: 47) argues, Kentridge's "growing interest in strategies of representation … provides the missing connection between events in the so-called real world and the artist's occasionally ironic distancing of himself from them". For Kentridge, the "uncertain and imprecise way of constructing a drawing is sometimes a model of how to construct meaning" (cited in Christov-Bakargiev 1999: 35) and art as an activity thus becomes a "metaphor for the way we think" (cited in Christov-Bakargiev 1999: 17), a way of "trying to understand who we are or how we operate in the world" (cited in Christov-Bakargiev 1999: 35). Consequently, in Kentridge's work, drawing is

seen to be a "model for knowledge" (Christov-Bakargiev 1999: 8), a "potential model of being and becoming in the world". Thus, like many contemporary artists today, an aspect of art practice that fascinates Kentridge (1999: 118) is the notion of how an idea comes into being. As a result the process of creating – the very activity of art – is often "at the core of his creative method" (Cameron 1999: 50). For Kentridge (1999: 119), the process of creating an artwork is very similar to the act of speaking, for "only occasionally do we test a sentence in our heads before speaking", suggesting that a tension exists between "the impulse and knowledge of the general direction" in which we want to go and "a reliance on habit, experience and unconscious parts of the brain" for a coherent utterance. For this reason, Kentridge (1999: 114) has often found that "a drawing which is of some interest in its first impulse becomes too cautious, overworked or tame as the work progresses". Animation, however, enables him to record each moment of the drawing, to follow "this process of vision and revision" as it took place (Kentridge 1999: 114). Drawn on rough paper with charcoal, "images which seem so solid and dark can be removed with the swipe of a cloth" (Kentridge 1999: 108). Thus, as is evident in a series of stills from Kentridge's *Sobriety, Obesity & Growing Old* (Fig.19), it is as a result of the history of changes, the traces of marks left behind on the paper, that movement is animated by the imperfection of erasure.

Consequently, it is as a result of his "interest in process and change" that Kentridge was drawn "to an art form that is constantly in motion" (Boris 2001: 29). Thus, in light of the first chapter's discussion of Bourriaud's call for an altermodern radicant artist, one could argue that Kentridge's art practice is not only rooted in its *own* history, but it is also an art practice that is determined to set those roots in motion through animation. For this reason his art practice is, in a sense, always a work in progress. By "conjuring an atmosphere of historical memory" (Cameron 1999: 38), by preventing the art object from hiding its own history, Kentridge explores the relationship between forgetting and remembering. Dealing with themes of "subjugation and emancipation, guilt and confession, trauma and healing" (Christov-Bakargiev 1999: 8) in previous work, Kentridge's preoccupation with perception has often been inspired by "the difficulty we have in holding onto passions, impressions, ways of seeing things, the way that things which seem to be indelibly imprinted on our memories still fade and become elusive" (Kentridge 1999: 127).

Consequently, for Kentridge, knowledge is "constantly negotiated between the present and memory" (Christov-Bakargiev 1999: 34) and animation has been a means of preventing the "human act of disremembering the past". For Cameron (1999: 38), "it borders on historical irony that … one of the most compelling artists working today has joined together the definitive art form of the past hundred years – film – with the most tradition-bound of all visual media, drawing". For John Halas (1970: 7), however, it is not so surprising that many contemporary artists have been preoccupied with animation, for "all living organisms, from the smallest microplasms to the largest cells, manifest their existence

through movement". Consequently, in creating the illusion of three-dimensional movement, artists are "largely responding to the nature of movement itself" (Halas 1970: 8).

Since the creation of motion is the essence of animation, Halas (1970: 12) suggests that film is "the pure form of art which comes closest to … kinetic movement". And movement, as a simultaneously creative and destructive function, has always been central to Kentridge's art practice. Kentridge (1999: 112) soon found, however, that "the cumbersome and archaic technique of charcoal drawing and erasure … impose[d] severe limitations on the mobility and interaction of the [drawn] figures" in his animations. Consequently his work with more sculptural forms - like puppetry, collage and shadows - has often been an attempt to increase "the possibilities of versatile three-dimensional movements" (1999: 112) in his art practice. This tension is clearly explored in *I am not me, the horse is not mine*, and particularly in *Country Dances II (Paper)* (Fig.8), a film fragment in which Kentridge's two-dimensional collaged figure attempts to mimic the shadow dance projected by a three-dimensional human figure in *Country Dances I (Shadow)* (Fig.7), but eventually disintegrates. It is through animation, however, that the collaged figure emerges and it is by moving in and out of coherence that each looped film fragment echoes Kentridge's fascination with the process of an artwork, an idea, coming into being.

Thus it is in Kentridge's experimentation with perception – with memory, the subconscious and "the realm of human imagination" (Cameron 1999: 46) – that *I am not me, the horse is not mine* is balanced between what one sees and what one knows. In a postmodern age defined by "the exploration of borderline situations" (Kentridge cited in Christov-Bakargiev 1999: 30), Kentridge (cited in Kimmelman 2008: 20) suggests that people are made "out of fragments we can't really control". When asked about the doubling of images in previous films like *Stereoscope* (Fig.15), Kentridge (cited in Christov-Bakargiev 1999: 30) suggested that they were inspired by the European modernist notion of stream of consciousness where thought is perceived to be "free floating connections rather than a programmed, clear progression". Consequently, his work is often characterised by "contradictory thoughts running in tandem" (Kentridge cited in Christov-Bakargiev 1999: 30), by a "double vision" (Kentridge cited in Christov-Bakargiev 1999: 31).

In an interview with John Lloyd (2009) about Kentridge's installation of *(Repeat) From the Beginning (2008)*, Kentridge suggests that the sculptures from his film fragment *Return* (Fig.20) could be regarded as "anti-stereoscopy". Constructed from wire and fragments of black paper and mounted on a turntable, the *Return* sculptures only formed a coherent image from a certain point in their revolution. According to Kentridge (cited in Lloyd 2009), the principle of constructing them is thus that they need "monocular vision, because you have to see a three-dimensional object as a two-dimensional shape. So it's the opposite of Renaissance painting where you have a flat image trying to

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look three-dimensional". Thus, while a stereoscope works by creating depth out of two images, in *Return* one's processes of perception are involved in making a three-dimensional image flat (Kentridge cited in Lloyd 2009). Instead of exploring what Crary (1992: 120) would call the stereoscope's "apprehension of differences", the *Return* sculptures thus reassert and celebrate the fragmentation of subjective perception.

Similarly Kentridge's *I am not me, the horse is not mine*, exhibited in 2008 at the Iziko National Gallery in conjunction with the Goodman Gallery Cape's installation of *(Repeat) From the Beginning*, could be regarded as anti-stereoscopic, particularly in the simultaneous projection of eight separate but related looped films into one room. By revolving in and out of coherence, like the sculptures created for *Return*, *I am not me, the horse is not mine* film fragments could both be regarded as the artist's various attempts to bring different historical contexts and the "disparate parts of oneself together" (Kentridge cited in Christov-Bakargiev 1999: 23) – reality and memory, the present and the past – to create an altermodern sense of subjectivity, an altermodern exploration of the nature of perception.

For this reason it is interesting that, in the various film fragments that make up *I am not me, the horse is not mine*, Kentridge does not directly quote a nineteenth-century optical device in order to explore the subjective and fragmented nature of human perception in the construction of knowledge. According to Jean Baudrillard (cited in Geoffrey Winthrop-Young and Michael Wutz 1999: xv), it is dangerous to believe that media are neutral technological systems dependent on those who use them because, as he argued in *Requiem for the Media*, media "are not *coefficients* but *effectors* of ideology", they are not simply a mediation between those who communicate and those who consume information. Echoing similar arguments by Crary and Virilio, Baudrillard suggests that media are as responsible for determining a historical situation as that situation is for determining the development of new media. Indeed, the media – megaphones, Tatlin's communication tower, Shostakovich and his piano, Russian Constructivist and Dada visual strategies – represented in Kentridge's film fragments seem to take on a life of their own. They take part in the shadowy processions of *A Lifetime of Enthusiasm* (Fig.1), subdue the Nose and his ambitions in *The Horse Is Not Mine* (Fig. 2) and *His Majesty The Nose* (Fig.4), grow out of Shostakovich's musical score and attach themselves to the composer's body in *Commissariat for Enlightenment* (Fig.3), while the Russian Constructivist collages of *That Ridiculous Blank Space Again (A One-Minute Love Story)* (Fig.6) and *Country Dances II (Paper)* (Fig.8) communicate by violently and chaotically deconstructing each other. And although it is unusual of Kentridge to have not directly quoted a nineteenth-century optical device in *I am not me, the horse is not mine*, it is significant that in the various visual strategies of the film fragments, and particularly in his use of shadows, that this mediation of human perception is made conscious.

In an interview with Christopher Turner, Victor Stoichita, author of *A Short History of the Shadow*, argues that "the shadow has always been integral to theories of art and knowledge", because of the "complex psychological meanings that we project onto them" (cited in Turner 2007: 65). In Greek mythology, the shadow was a metaphor "for the *psyche*, the soul" of the dead, consequently death and shadows became inextricably linked (Stoichita cited in Turner 2007: 65). This negative meaning ascribed to the shadow was emphasised further by Plato's parable of the origin of knowledge in his *Republic* – a story in which prisoners, chained by their necks and legs to face the wall of a cave, only saw the projected shadow of reality cast by the light of a fire, and not reality itself. Thus, for Plato, in order to "attain true knowledge" they had to "renounce the shadow stage and progress out of the cave, into the sun" (Stoichita cited in Turner 2007: 65). Consequently, Stoichita (cited in Turner 2007: 65) argues, Plato's *Republic* – a foundational text during the Enlightenment – created an enduring comparison between the shadow and art in Western thought, where shadows are not only symbolic of the ignorant, the unenlightened, the unmodern, but are also regarded simply to be representations, copies of reality.

For this reason, Stoichita draws parallels between the Platonic origin of knowledge and Pliny the Elder's record of the story of the origin of painting in his *Natural History*. In Pliny's narrative, "the shadow wasn't charged with a negative aspect" because the origin of representation resides in "a love story" (Stoichita cited in Turner 2007: 65) about Dibutade, the daughter of a Corinthian potter. Before her lover left for a journey, she traced the shadow of his face, cast by candlelight, onto the wall behind him. Her father later carved within the traced lines, and using the wall as a mould, he cast a clay representation of his daughter's lover. This myth played an important role in early Western imagination, particularly during the classic revival that took place in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. By the mid-nineteenth century it was, however, gradually forgotten and displaced by Plato's parable. Stoichita (cited in Turner 2007: 65) attributes this to the fact that, for the Enlightenment mentality, it was difficult to accept that representation may have "originated in the absence of light, in a dark spot". After all, in naming a period of growing secular advances the 'Enlightenment', light had been inextricably linked with lucidity and rationality (Jay 1994: 85). For Marina Warner (2007: 86), however, the significance of the fading popularity of the story of Dibutade resides in that fact that it coincides with the invention of photography, in the "growing realization that human vision was limited, discriminating and linked to the vagaries of memory", that a "machine might be able to see more, and more clearly". Consequently, for Martin Jay (1994: 27), Plato's cave is thus also responsible for Western philosophy's distrust of sense perception, particularly of visual objectivity.

In light of this, it is interesting that art critics have often referred to Kentridge's experimentations with shadows as being an interrogation of the parable of Plato's cave, for Kentridge's interest in shadows is

almost a reverse journey from the realm of illusion into enlightenment. Indeed, in *I am not me, the horse is not mine*, Kentridge's film fragments are projected onto the walls of a darkened room from behind the viewer and in many of the film fragments the shadowy phantasmagoric figures are cast by an unknown source. Consequently, as Carlos Basualdo (2007: 13) has suggested, with regard to Kentridge's previous experimentation with shadows, "it is not the object that projects its shadow, but the shadow that imagines the object and projects it into our consciousness, shaping it". Thus, as in the shadows cast on the wall of Plato's cave, one begins to trust the image created by the object, not the object itself (Guercio 2007: 50). In his work, however, Kentridge privileges "neither light nor enlightenment" because he believes that "both shadow and light, a thematic double, are necessary to approach full and true knowledge" (Rosenthal 2009: 55). Consequently a consistent theme in his art practice is a move away from "the certainty of sunlight" toward "the illuminating shadow" (Rosenthal 2009: 56). Thus the belief that knowledge can be found in darkness, what Stafford (2001: 80) would call a "disenchanted rationality", is echoed in the work of Kentridge, particularly in his use of shadows. Shadows figure prominently in *I am not me, the horse is not mine*, but have always been an important visual device in his previous work – the most well-known example would perhaps be *Shadow Procession* (Fig. 21), an animation that is echoed by Kentridge's film fragment *A Lifetime of Enthusiasm* (Fig.1).

According to Gabriele Guercio (2007: 49), "humans seem to have an enduring fascination with shadows" and as a result they have often been studied "in both art and science for what they can tell us about perception" - about seeing and knowing. For Kentridge (cited in Guercio 2007: 62),

> the child who plays with shadows delights not just in seeing the image of a creature on the wall, but also in watching and grasping the illusion, in learning how shadows of hands can be transformed into animals. This awareness of how we construct meaning, and this inescapable need to make sense of shapes, [is for him] very central, indeed essential, to what it means to be alive – to live in the world with open eyes.

It is interesting that Kentridge (2003: 157) believes that it is sometimes the shadow of an object that can tell one more about an object than the object itself, for

> looking at shadows is always finding something we already know … recognition is immediate and effortless. It describes a different kind of knowledge … it understands that the relationship between seeing and knowing is not simple. It proclaims that one does not have to translate what one has seen into a rationalist model before it becomes a usable piece of knowledge.

For Kentridge (2003: 159), seeing "is always a mediation between this image and other knowledge" and what "shadows as objects, silhouettes or puppets" do, however, is "make [that] mediation conscious".

According to Christov-Bakargiev (2009: 120), Kentridge's belief in "uncertainty as a source of knowledge" is thus reflected in his interest in "shadow vision as opposed to direct vision". In a scientific analysis of the role that shadows play in perception, Michael Baxandall (1997: 8) argues that we never see the world directly, but rather through the "two-dimensional pattern of light that falls on the retina of the eye". Thus, "what the eye receives and the mind has to work on are continuities and discontinuities of reflected light" (Baxandall 1997: 134). Light is "energy on the move" (Baxandall 1997: 144), and as such light is never "a naive witness or a plain map of physical reality" (Baxandall 1997: 9). Instead, as Baxandall (1997: 8) argues, vision is comprised by a "varied experience" of how light meets and is reflected off the surfaces of the things that surround us – like us, it is "shaped by its own experience of encountering" its reality. Thus it is because the location of "the cause of a dark patch … carries some information about the shape of the world", that shadows are as important as light (Baxandall 1997: 32). They are "central to our perception of the world", because they are a product of this shaping, of the behaviour of light (Baxandall 1997: 32). As Kentridge has recognised and explored in his own work, shadows are not simply a "deficiency in the quantity of light meeting a surface", "discontinuities of luminance", gaps in light (Baxandall 1997: 8), nor are they, as Plato's parable proposed, a "denial of light" and "the bearer of imperfect knowledge" of the reality that projects them (Baxandall 1997: 144).

For Baxandall (1997: 152), the negative connotations of shadows thus reside in the fact that shadows have historically been regarded as the "opponent" of light and rationality. The Biblical *Book of Genesis*, in particular, emphasizes that an important part of creation lay in God's separation of light, a 'good' creative force from darkness, an evil, transgressive and 'primitive' force (Pastoureau 2008: 20). According to Baxandall (1997: 152), Leonardo Da Vinci believed that the shadow was stronger than light, because it can extinguish it, where as an increase in light only serves to make stronger shadows and thus one of his many Enlightenment projects was an attempt to prove that shadows were emitted from an "umbrous" body, just as light was emitted from a luminous body.

In light of the cultural associations that people have with darkness, it is thus not surprising that shadows, in their obscurity, are often associated with danger, misfortune and transgression. According to Martin Jay (1994: 6), vision was not only the last of the human senses to develop fully in evolution, but it is also the last sense to develop in the foetus. Thus it is interesting that Pastoureau (2008: 24) argues that our fear or, at the very least, our mistrust of darkness is instinctive, because as we have never been nocturnal animals. Pastoureau further argues that it is because we have not evolved to see

clearly in the dark that, over centuries, humans have become more and more 'domesticated' with sight becoming our primary sense. Baxandall (1997: 134) suggests, however, that the uncanny nature of a shadow may reside simply in the fact that they are "disconcertingly flat", unlike the three-dimensional object that they represent. Consequently, as in Kentridge's ironic series of bronze cast figures (Fig.22) from *Shadow Procession* (Fig.21), Baxandall's interest in shadow perception lies in the fact that shadows, as an entity, are not "self-supporting" (Baxandall 1997: 60), they have neither a "stable form nor continuity of existence" (Baxandall 1997: 144).

A shadow has no weight, no texture, no sound, no smell of its own. Unverifiable by senses other than vision, a shadow's existence relies on a surface "distinct from that which is causing the privation of light" and it is thus a strange composition of both the object that casts it and the "alien surface" on to which it is cast (Baxandall 1997: 60). Consequently, Baxandall (1997: 144) argues that the knowledge a shadow offers to its viewer is not necessarily knowledge of the object that projects it, but rather knowledge of the circumstances in which that object finds itself. In light of this argument, it is interesting that Christov-Bakargiev (2009: 120) attributes the significance of shadows in Kentridge's work to the fact that shadows, as "voids rather than things themselves", imply an indirect gaze. Thus, although this chapter does not in any way attempt to be a comprehensive treatise on the role of vision in Western philosophy, it is necessary to briefly discuss psychoanalytic theorist Kaja Silverman's interpretation of Jacque Lacan's *Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* in which, using the camera's mechanics as a signifier of the gaze, he explored the role of vision in the formation of a coherent selfhood. And although Silverman, in her *The Threshold of the Visible World*, draws on Lacan's 'mirror stage' theory in order to explore the demarcation between spectator and spectacle specifically in film theory, her hypothesis is useful to this discussion because she investigates the 'othering' relationship that exists between the look of the subject and the gaze of the object.

As demonstrated by Crary's discussion of nineteenth-century optical devices, humans occupy an ambiguous position as objects of knowledge, but also as subjects that know - even if this knowing is not innocent or neutral. As in Crary's *Techniques of the Observer*, Lacan's observer is thus a viewer who no longer regards the world from a transcendental mastering vantage point, "a viewer whose unreliable and corporeally circumscribed vision locates him or her *within* the field of vision and knowledge" (Silverman 1996: 129). Following Lacan, Silverman argues that it is problematic to align the look of the subject with that of the camera in film theory, because one cannot assume that the "camera always works to the credit of human vision" (1996: 127). As an optical device, a camera is simply a "prosthetic" aid to the deficiencies in human perception (Silverman 1996: 130). Through the mechanics of a camera lens, light reflected off an object allows an image of that object to be captured on a roll of film. For this reason, Lacan argues, that it is important to recognize that although an observer may look at an object through a camera, the object also gazes back (Silverman 1996: 132). In

using the camera's mechanics as a metaphor for human perception and identity, Lacan's theory proposes an observer that is always an *observed* observer.

For Lacan, a significant component of human perception, in the construction of knowledge, is the 'image-screen', the site where the subject's look and the object's gaze meet. As Silverman explains, Lacan's 'image-screen' is the meeting point between the reality of an observed object and the observer's 'image' of that object (Silverman 1996: 132); it is "the threshold of the visible world" (1996: 226). Lacan's 'image-screen' is thus not only the remembered personal connotations that one might associate with the object, but it is also the historically and "culturally generated" assumption of difference – class, race, nationality, sexuality, age and so on – through which we perceive others (Silverman 1996: 135). It is because these perceptions of difference are "culturally generated", Silverman (1996: 226) argues, that an individual's experience of an object's gaze will thus not only be personal, but also influenced by "the unceasing mass production of highly idealized body representations".

Thus not only are the identities of others reflected in the way we perceive them, but our identity is reflected by the way others perceive us. When one perceives otherness, Lacan argues, the self feels threatened. In striving to make difference familiar, Lacan's subject subsequently experiences either a negation of their self or of that of the other (Silverman 1996: 42). For this reason, in Lacan's *Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, a mirror reflection was used as an extended metaphor for the way in which the formation of a coherent sense of self is made by "reducing the other to an image of the self" (Jay 1994: 346). For it is only when the other is separated from the self, that the self can benefit from this recognition (Jay 1994: 346). This notion is most clearly expressed by the famous words of Jean Paul Sartre (cited in Jay 1994: 289), "I see *myself* because *somebody* sees me". Silverman (1996: 135) explores the 'othering' that occurs in understanding one's own identity further, by drawing attention to the fact that we are often surprised and disappointed by how we look in photographs, because we do not expect ourselves to look the way we do: in a photograph, we 'other' ourselves. As Roland Barthes (cited in Jay 1994: 448) argues in his autobiography, "you are the only one who can never see yourself except as an image … you are condemned to the repertoire of (your body's) images". One can only encounter oneself in mirror, lens and shadow reflections, that is, in copies of oneself. Consequently, Lacan's *Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, and his 'mirror stage' theory in particular, was significant in the history of Western philosophy because it drew attention to the fact that "our apprehension of the world is always mediated by representation" (Silverman 1996: 155).

As has been demonstrated in this chapter, the fact that we can only know the world through our perception of it - and through *our* perception of others' perceptions of *their* world – is a fact of which

Kentridge is very aware in his own art practice. Kentridge's use of shadows in *I am not me, the horse is not mine* is a visual strategy for exploring the construction of knowledge in human perception. What is interesting about this is that, as they imply an indirect gaze, we can only know the reality of objects through our perception of the shadows that they cast. In Kentridge's film fragments, memory and imagination are thus left to their own devices, unencumbered by the threatening rationality and reality of the objects that cast the shadows. Thus his shadowy figures are, like Major Kvalyov's Nose, given the freedom to take on a life of their own.

The tension between the shadow and the object that cast it, the object that gives the shadow its existence, is most evidently explored in *Country Dances I (Shadow)* (Fig.7), a film fragment in which the dancer that casts the shadow of a Russian military figure is partially visible at the right-hand of the film fragment. Consequently, despite being enlarged and distorted by moving lights, one is always aware of the reality of that which casts the shadow, of the source of Kentridge's illusion and the historical and cultural context in which the artist is working.

For Hal Foster (1999: 242), the significance of Lacan's *Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* lies, however, in the agency that he attributed to the gaze: it is threatening, and thus potentially dangerous to the coherence of the subject's selfhood. According to Foster (1999: 243), it is contemporary art's refusal to "pacify the gaze, to unite the imaginary and the symbolic against the real", that sets it apart from the art of the past. Postmodernism, Foster (1999: 243) argues, doesn't simply attempt to "tear at the screen" between the look of a subject and the gaze of an object, but regards the screen as having already been torn. Foster (1999: 247) suggests, however, that in another of postmodernism's paradoxical situations, contemporary art has found that it is necessary to preserve the screen in order to retain the "trangressive potential" of art. The postmodern phenomenological condition is thus no longer a case of "I see *myself* because *somebody* sees me" (Sartre cited in Jay 1994: 289), but rather a self-reflexive situation in which "I see myself seeing myself", but "I am not what I imagined myself to be" (Foster 1999: 243). As suggested in the previous chapter, this fragmentation of subjectivity is reflected in the title of Kentridge's installation, a title that denies not only subjectivity – *I am not me* – but also ownership – *the horse is not mine*.

Recalling Turner's interview with Stoichita, again, it is worth noting that Stoichita (cited in Turner 2007: 66) compares Jean Piaget's 1927 study of children's responses to their own shadows with Lacan's 'mirror stage' theory. In this study, Piaget found that children are only able to recognise their own shadow as being a part of themselves at the ages of eight or nine. It is at this age that a child begins to be able to predict where their shadow will fall; consequently it is at this age that "the shadow finally becomes synonymous with the absence of light" and a child subsequently is able to recognize that their shadow is a projection of their self, that it is their double (Stoichita cited in Turner

2007: 66). For Stoichita (cited in Turner 2007: 66) a child's recognition of their shadow being a part of their self is, however, not one of narcissistic identification like Lacan's 'mirror stage', but rather one of "otherness". For where Lacan's 'mirror stage' "primarily involves the indentification of the *I*", Piaget's 'shadow stage' involves "mainly the identification of the *other*" (Stoichita cited in Turner 2007: 66). The notion of identifying otherness was most infamously exploited in the eighteenth century by a Swiss pastor, Johann Kaspar Lavater, whose four-volume *Essays on Physiognomy* argued that it was possible to interpret a person's moral characteristics from the profile of their silhouette. For Stoichita (cited in Turner 2007: 67), Lavater's pseudo-science, despite being problematic, was thus significant because it not only "recognised man's soul in his shadow", but also the potential for "a shadow in his soul".

Uncannily imitative of the mobility of that which projects it, the shadow is thus often regarded as a "parasitic animal" (Baxandall 1997: 144) and it is because a shadow is not "self-supporting" (Baxandall 1997: 60), that it is often viewed as threatening, as concealing destructive presence. Thus in Western culture shadows are often used to represent parts of humanity that one wishes to distance oneself from: absence, loss, and memory; the ominous, the unwelcome, the monstrous and the different. Indeed, in Western literature one of the most enduring children's stories is J.M Barry's *Peter Pan*, a story in which the loss of a child's shadow is equated with eternal youth, a "ghostly living death" (Stoichita cited in Turner 2007: 67). It is in being reunited with his shadow and in recognising that it is a part of him that Peter Pan is thus able to accept the fact that he is growing up, that he will eventually die.

As I mentioned in my introduction, it is interesting that in *I am not me, the horse is not mine* the loss of Major Kvalyov's nose seems to be equated with the loss of his shadow, of his conscience, and therefore of himself. Kentridge's Nose becomes the shadowy figure of a lost conscience that travels through most of his film fragments, through his ethnographic construction of Russia's cultural and political history. According to Kentridge (2003: 159), "one's relationship to one's own shadow – which is not the same as oneself, which one does not own, but which is an inescapable attribute and accompaniment" is a "midpoint between a familiar self and the otherness of the rest of the world". This would support Jane Taylor's (2003: 53) suggestion that, in Kentridge's work, the shadow implies a split self, that the roles we play in life are no less substantial than an illusory ideal self. It is in this sense of a historically divided self, this preoccupation with the creative processes of perception, that the aspects of a Gothic aesthetic can be identified in Kentridge's diverse oeuvre.

Nowadays, the 'Gothic' is a negative term more often applied to low-budget horror movies and contemporary subcultures than it is to art and literature. But originally the 'Gothic' was an ethnic designation, referring to the Germanic tribes that brought down the Roman Empire. Consequently, as

a term, it was associated with the uncivilised and threatening 'Other' (Trott 2005: 482). During the late eighteenth century, however, the term acquired more positive connotations, because it became a culturally aesthetic and politically motivated means for Britain to distance itself from France. According to Simon Bainbridge (2005: 16), the American and French Revolutions had been welcomed as signs of a new age of freedom, but the revolutionary spirit was soon called into question by the increasingly violent nature of the events which followed: the execution of Louis XVI and his family, the twenty-two year war between Britain and France, the Jacobin 'Reign of Terror' and Napoleon's rise to power. Up until this point in history, the Enlightenment had heavily influenced European culture in its commitment to "advancing the cause of rationalist and scientific enquiry in every field of human activity" (Brooks 1999: 51-52). In contrast, the Gothic Revival was thus what Martin Jay (1994: 212) would call a "Counter-Enlightenment abandonment of the project of illuminating reason itself".

For this reason, one of the most influential theoretical treatises from this era was Edmund Burke's *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*, which radically equated aesthetic experience with the physicality of emotions (Monk 1960: 85). Based on the antithesis of pain and pleasure, Burke's theory considered pain and terror to be the purest, most sublime of human emotions, because, for Burke (2007: 22), "no passion so effectually robs the mind of all its powers of acting and reasoning as *fear*". Burke's theory rejected the Cartesian separation of the mind and body, because "pain operates on the mind through the body, and terror on the body through the mind" (Monk 1960: 97). For Burke, terror was thus associated with anything that caused uncertainty: obscurity, power, darkness, vacuity, silence, vastness, infinity, difficulty and magnificence (Monk 1960: 93) and these sublime characteristics were absorbed into the aesthetics of the Gothic Revival. Where French neo-classicism – fuelled by the eighteenth-century archaeological excavations that took place at Herculaneum and Pompeii (Rutherford 2009: 41) – was considered simple, rational, ordered, universal and modern, the British Gothic Revival embraced the sublime aesthetics of the ornate, convoluted, irrational and chaotic aesthetics of medievalism in a reassertion of monarchical power.

As an aesthetic term, the 'Gothic' subsequently came to symbolize nostalgia for the past, and an escape from the social, political and economic turbulence of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Thus, as the first visual rendering of the Gothic aesthetic, eighteenth-century Gothic Revival architecture and landscaping was often inspired by a combination of religious and monarchical architecture from medieval Europe. The neo-classical style of art, architecture and landscaping was geometric, symmetrical and strictly proportioned. As the cultural and political antithesis of French neo-classicism, the Gothic Revival style was thus often asymmetrical and ornate, celebrating the nostalgic and haunting atmosphere of medieval ruins, and the wilderness of

hedgerows. As in Romanticism, a cultural movement indebted to the Gothic Revival, nature was often a central and celebrated theme and, in Gothic architecture, ceilings and their supports were decorated to look like the natural ceiling of a forest (Fig. 23). Ironically, as the Gothic Revival became a more fashionable aesthetic than French neoclassicism, British aristocrats began to build artificial ruins (Fig.24) and re-landscape their estates, in an attempt to give their properties a wilder, more historical appearance. [9]

It was in literature, however, that the Gothic aesthetic was considered to be most transgressive. Mark Edmundson (2007: 32), attributes this to the fact that although "late eighteenth century Gothic was a literature of revolution", it was a literature whose plot was motivated by "the guilt of the revolutionary haunted by the … past which he has been striving to destroy". Anne Williams (2007: 27) takes this further, suggesting that the Gothic aesthetic "systematically represents 'otherness'", often involving a transgression of the boundaries between binaries: light/dark, right/left, male/female, rational/irrational, living/dead, human body/technology, urban/rural, innocence/corruption, inside/outside, one/many and so on. For Nikos Papstergiadis (1996: 100), as discussed in the previous chapter, these are the boundaries upon which one's values, one's distinction between self /other, order/chaos are developed. Consequently, one could argue, transgressions of these boundaries were Gothic, precisely because they were a transgression of the notion of 'home', of familiarity and safety. In light of this, it is interesting that Stafford (2001: 80) attributes the nineteenth century's fascination with optical devices to an "emotional impulse", a "basic human desire to get from here to there, from the outside to the inside, from the circumscribed to the borderless" – both in the exterior world and the interior world of the human body.

An important characteristic of the Gothic aesthetic in eighteenth century literature is thus often the döppelganger-like relationship between the hero and the villain, what Edmundson (2007: 32) terms a "disintegration of self". The notion of the double haunts all forms of culture, Edmundson (2007: 30) argues, because it is the manifestation of the "sense of an unnegotiable divide between the true or natural self and society, between nature and culture". Edmundson (2007: 30) suggests that it was in eighteenth-century Gothic literature that the audience was invited "to acquaint themselves with, and to fear, the shadow that dwells within", that one ought to be afraid "of nothing so much as ourselves". In light of this, it is interesting that the döppelganger relationship between the artist as an active participant versus a passive observer of history has often haunted Kentridge's work, particularly in his early Soho Eckstein and Felix Teitlebaum films. For Kentridge (cited in Auping 2009: 238), Soho (Fig.31) and Felix (Fig.32) were essentially "two characters … both part of one brain trying to figure out its relation to the world", and were thus drawn as a stereoscopic "demonstration of thinking". The

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[9] It was also during this period that the ha-ha was invented, a landscaping technique that eradicated the need for fencing between grazing farmland and aristocratic estates, creating the impression of a harmonized rural existence.

last four films only featured Soho, and Kentridge (cited in Auping 2009: 238) attributes this to the fact that when he "made the sad realization that Felix and Soho had both become a split, displaced self-portrait, it became difficult to get Felix".

The loss of Felix, as a passive observer cast in the role of the artist's conscience, is similarly echoed in *I am not me, the horse is not mine*, an installation that embodies what Charles Harrison (2008: 49) would call the avant-garde's "uncertainty about the relationship between autonomy and political effectiveness". As previously noted, Major Kvalyov's Nose becomes the shadowy embodiment of not only a lost conscience, but also of a fragmented subjectivity travelling through the film fragments, and 'projected' over the artist's body in *His Majesty The Nose* (Fig.4). The Nose is a symbol of absurd power, recalling Kentridge's previous work with Alfred Jarry's satirical figure of despotic vulgarity, greed and arrogance, Ubu Roi, whose threatening shadowy appearance in *Shadow Procession* (Fig. 21) is echoed by the Nose's appearance in *A Lifetime of Enthusiasm* (Fig.1).

The Gothic Revival that took place in late eighteenth century British culture thus had a profound effect on society as we know it today, for its exploration of the repressed unconscious and humanity's ambivalent relationship with technological advancements inspired great works of literature like Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (a monstrous, but intelligent creature made from human fragments), Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, Robert Louis Stevenson's *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, the Romantic poets, Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre*, Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*, Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey*, the novels of Charles Dickens and so on. Similarly, art movements (in particular, Romanticism, Impressionism, the Pre-Raphelites, Dada, Surrealism, Abstract Expressionism), cinema (for example, Tim Burton, Disney, classical and superhero epics, Hitchcock's psychological thrillers and the horror movie genre), fashion (Punk and Goth subcultures) and music (Punk, Goth, Heavy Metal) owe much of their transgressive qualities to the anti-establishment spirit that the Gothic Revival set in motion.

According to Gilda Williams (2007: 19), the Gothic aesthetic has a tendency to revive itself in "periods of crisis". She attributes the most recent Gothic aesthetic trend in contemporary culture to the 9/11 terrorist attack on the World Trade Centres and the subsequent wars and worldwide paranoia. In light of this, it is interesting that American movies and television series produced in the last decade have been dominated by the escapist narratives of threatened utopian worlds; superheroes; pirate and science fiction adventures; classical, historical and science fiction epics; forensic and psychological dramas. Monsters and alien dramas are also fashionable lately, the majority of television series and movies focusing in particular on vampires living in contemporary America. I would argue that this is probably due to the fact that as vampires are visually human on the exterior, their monstrous nature is more threatening. It is reasonable to accept then that the Gothic today is used, as it was in the eighteenth century, to deal with the reality of the present, to explore the monstrous potential of

humanity and the threatening nature of war, poverty, crime and diseases like HIV/AIDS. For this reason, it is interesting that South Africa's infamous *District 9* explored the horrors of the recent xenophobic attacks against our own species by exteriorising racial difference into anthropomorphic alien figures.

Gilda William's hypothesis is echoed by Shamin Momin (2007: 49), who describes the Gothic sensibility as being "historically … a counter-Enlightenment impulse, emerging in response to pervasive cycles of conservatism or repression". It is a nostalgic aesthetic, for "where the modern strove ahead, the Gothic looks back" (Momin 2007: 49) in an attempt to comprehend "the failures and legacies of the past" (Blazwick 2008: 39). Thus the Gothic is "inextricably linked to the myriad of ways in which the present imagine[s] its lost past" (Brooks 1999: 4). The 'Gothic' is therefore a borrowed term in contemporary art and is often applied to artworks that focus on death, deviance, the erotic macabre, psychologically charged sites, disembodied voices and fragmented bodies (Williams, G 2007: 12).

According to American art critic Jerry Saltz (2007: 48), most art "that is primarily Gothic is and always has been schlock … the best Modern Gothic art is way more than Gothic, and that's what makes it worth looking at and thinking about". In light of this it is interesting that Gilda Williams emphasises that fact that few contemporary artists would define themselves as Gothic or would "knowingly root their work in Gothic sources" (Williams, G 2007: 13). Consequently, Gilda Williams (2007: 13) suggests that the Gothic is a term in contemporary art that "serves mostly to identify a peculiar, dark sensitivity shared by the artist and the observer" of an artwork and is therefore "more atmospheric than neatly defined" (Williams, G 2007: 14). Thus the most important element of the Gothic aesthetic, for Gilda Williams (2007: 19), is that it has always remained "non-, anti- and counter- by definition", that it is "always asserting that the conventional values of life and enlightenment are actually less instructive than darkness and death"[10].

Christoph Grünenburg (2007: 38) emphasises that "Gothic art today speaks of the subjects that transgress society's vague definitions of normality, discreetly peeling away the pretences of outmoded conventions and transversing the amorphous border between good and evil, sanity and madness, disinterested pleasure and visual offensiveness". No longer concerned with the production of Burke's grand and majestic terror, the Gothic sublime in art today is, for Grunenberg (2007: 43), simply an embodiment of a "deep fear of the unfamiliar future". I would suggest that it is, more significantly,

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[10] Gilda Williams (2007: 14) suggests that the most Gothic of artists working today would thus be Damien Hirst and the Chapman brothers, for their work focuses on the grotesque and the abject, on horror and the uncanny. Similarly I would argue that the most Gothic of artists working in South Africa today would be Jane Alexander and Steven Cohen – particularly his recent film *Golgotha*, in which he walks through the Ground Zero streets of New York wearing a business suit with 'skelettos'- stilettos made from human skulls.

characterised by postmodernism's ambivalent relationship with the art of the past, for as Foster (1999: 256) suggests, in contemporary art Barthes' desacrilized author has been reborn as a "zombie", a paradoxical figure of "absentee authority" and agency.

In light of this, it is interesting that Kentridge's *I am not me, the horse is not mine* has often been compared to the eighteenth-century phantasmagoria (Fig.27), a French Revolution inspired Gothic horror spectacle that spread through Europe with travelling entertainers. Using equipment derived from the camera obscura and early magic lanterns (Warner 2007: 75), the phantasmagoria's shadow play foreshadowed the invention of the cinema and photography in its ability to capture yet also animate and repeat the motion of living or imagined things (Warner 2007: 83). Interestingly, Crary attributes the diminishing popularity of nineteenth century optical devices – like the stereoscope, the phenakistiscope, the thraumascope, anamorphic drawings an so on – to the fact that they were insufficiently phantasmagoric. As scientific tools, the "undisguised nature of their operational structure and the form of subjection they entail" did not attempt to hide the illusion or mystification that surrounded the machine's operation (Crary 1992: 133). In contrast, phantasmagoric illusions were projected from an unseen source and through the use of shifting lights the phantasmagoric figures could be enlarged or diminished to create a sense of movement and space, to undermine "the solidity of things", to exploit the experience of a "shared nightmare" (Stafford 2001: 81). Thus in their projections phantasmagoria, essentially large-scale magic lanterns, "violated the containing orthogonals of linear perspective" (Stafford 2001: 48) by involving its spectators in the atmosphere of the illusion. For this reason, Kentridge's film fragment *Country Dances I (Shadow)* (Fig. 7) could be regarded as particularly phantasmagoric. As the light source is moved in relation to the position of the object, the shadow cast by the object begins to change. It becomes a "silhouette with *attitude*", a ghostly "dark two-dimensional trace of a being, its movements directly connected to the movements of the dancer", but simultaneously assumes a life of its own, seemingly independent of solidity of the object that not only grounds it, but gives it its existence (Kentridge in Biesenbach, Butler and Heckler 2009: 200).

Meaning an "assembly of phantasms" (Warner 2007: 75), the Counter-Enlightenment subject matter of the phantasmagoria was an intermingling of the secular and the sacred, often involving the spectral illusion of the supernatural, of the dead and the mad, of devils, ghosts and witches, monks and nuns, and classical figures like Orpheus and his Eurydice. Exploiting the shadow's potential to "evoke likeness with startling acuteness even when the originals are not known to the viewer or are figures of fantasy" (Warner 2007: 87), the spectral shows were thus "morbid, frequently macabre, supernatural, fit to inspire terror and dread, those qualities of the sublime" (Warner 2007: 76) so valued by the eighteenth-century Gothic Revival. Inspired by the Reign of Terror, the phantasmagoria was used to bring back France's victims, the guillotined infamous figures of the French Revolution, to its

audience. In what Jonathan Allen (2007: 97) calls a "meticulous choreography of concealment", shadows and darkness thus assisted the "unseen". The "characteristic material of the phantasmagoria" therefore occupied what Warner (2007: 79) calls "a transitional zone between the sublime and the gothic, between the solemn and the comic, and between seriously intended fears and sly mockery of such beliefs", a statement which could in many ways be applied to *I am not me, the horse is not mine*.

In a widely cited essay about cinema from 1925, Jean Goudal (cited in Jay 1994: 254) argues that when watching a film one's "body … undergoes a sort of temporary depersonalization which robs it of the sense of its own existence", reducing the observer to "nothing more than two eyes riveted to ten metres of white screen". What is so captivating about Kentridge's *I am not me, the horse is not mine*, however, is the fact that as people move through the room in which the film fragments are installed, their bodies interrupt the source of the projections by casting their shadows onto the walls of the room and *into* Kentridge's projections. When I visited the Iziko National Gallery's installation of *I am not me, the horse is not mine* in 2008, a group of school children separated from their teacher were fooling around in the installation space and when they discovered that they could cast shadows onto Kentridge's film fragments, they joined the shadowy procession of his *A Lifetime of Enthusiasm* (Fig. 1), prompting other visitors to do the same. The bodies of the observers, their shadows, thus become an integral part of the films, of experiencing Kentridge's *I am not me, the horse is not mine*. Consequently it is through one's own shadow, one could not help but be aware of one's body, of oneself, and of the source of Kentridge's illusion, of his construction of knowledge.

Although I would not categorise Kentridge as a Gothic artist *per se*, it is his preoccupation with a fragmented subjectivity that makes his art practice, and *I am not me, the horse is not mine* in particular, Gothic in nature. According to Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (cited in Jay 1994: 107), the French Revolution was the historical point at which the "valorization of darkness" became the "necessary complement, even the source of light", because it was the moment when the "light of principle merged into the opacity of the physical world and was lost". Just as the eighteenth-century phantasmagoria were haunted by "the guilt of the revolutionary haunted by the … past which he has been striving to destroy" (Edmundson 2007:32), Kentridge's *I am not me, the horse is not mine* is haunted by the lost ideals of the European avant-garde, Russian communism and South African democracy. It is thus in the Gothic fragmented subjectivity of *I am not me, the horse is not mine* that Kentridge's preoccupation with European modernism and his preoccupation with the processes of human perception become inextricably linked, embodying the notion that "the liberation of the senses and of perception is at the basis of any revolution" (Christov-Bakargiev 2008: 32).

Chapter 3

An Anthropological Quest: an imagining of a personal past through present artefacts

My own practical work has been motivated by Kentridge's experimentation with nineteenth-century optical devices and the role that they play in the construction of knowledge, and more particularly in his use of shadows and his belief that knowledge can been found through darkness. Similarly interested in the relationship between the two-dimensional and the three-dimensional, between the object and its historical trace, my practical work has used the shadow as a starting point. My maternal grandfather, Stuart Astley Young, owns a collection of nine late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century silhouette portraits of family members (Fig.28) of whom we know little about except for their names, the dates of their existence and objects that they have left behind – a mantle clock, a grandfather clock, an etching, some engraved plates, a notebook, wills and probates. We have no paintings of them, and the silhouettes were made before the invention of photography. So, in a sense, all we have left of these British ancestors are their shadows. Through the objects that they have left behind, by using the profiles of these unfamiliar family members, and by researching late eighteenth-century fashion, I have tried to imagine what they would have looked like by creating ceramic busts that, when spot-lit, will re-create these silhouettes as cast shadows (Fig.29-30).

In its two-dimensionality a silhouette is, as Emma Rutherford (2009: 8) argues, simultaneously "both something and nothing, a negative and a positive", it is both a portrait of oneself and one's shadow (Rutherford 2009: 9). The liminal status of the silhouette, as simultaneous image and trace, has been a longstanding fascination of mine. Reading Rutherford's *Silhouette: The Art of The Shadow*, I was struck by the observation that silhouettes are considered to be early photographs by experts. Indeed many of the optical devices that were invented to make the process of cutting silhouettes quicker – for example, the pantograph and the physiognotrace - led to the invention of the camera itself (Rutherford 2009: 52). Silhouettes were closely linked with shadows and were initially inspired by Pliny the Elder's story of the origin of painting, for Dibutade was the first recorded artist to have made a silhouette (Rutherford 2009: 13). The romantic and classical spirit of Dibutade's first representation, in its simplicity and as a memento of remembrance, appealed to the neo-classical spirit of the early eighteenth century (Fig.31). As Rutherford (2009: 185) reasons, in a period that was experiencing a greater expansion of trade relations, and thus a greater rate of exploration and immigration, there was a consistent demand for accurate, portable and inexpensive likenesses.

Cast and traced onto a piece of paper, silhouettes were originally referred to as shadowgraphs, or shades. According Rutherford, the term 'silhouette' only originated in France during the late

eighteenth century. Étienne de Silhouette was a French finance minister in Louis XV's court who imposed strict tax reforms on the nobility in order to reduce France's running deficit. Ridiculed by the court for having reduced the aristocracy to shadows of their former selves, Silhouette had a short term in office, and in a newspaper a caricaturist drew a shade of the finance minister, writing his name underneath (Rutherford 2009: 27). By aligning Silhouette with a relatively cheap and quick art form, the snub was not only directed at his miserly tax reforms and a mockery of his hobby of cutting shades, but also suggested that Silhouette had been nothing more than a fleeting shadow in the royal court (Rutherford 2009: 23). Silhouette's name gradually began to be used as an increasingly popular colloquial name for the paper cut portraits and eventually, by the end of the century, 'silhouette' was accepted into the French dictionary as an official term for the art form (Rutherford 2009: 23).

Despite being labelled an "armchair science" by critics because it had no scientific basis, Lavater's *Essays on Physiognomy* influenced the popularity of silhouettes, because he promoted the belief that a study and interpretation of features can give one insight into a person's characters. Consequently, it was largely due to the influence of Lavater's physiognomic theory that silhouettes became an abstracted "shorthand" for a person's social and physical identity (Terpak 2001: 294). Kara Walker is a contemporary artist whose installations of life-size silhouettes are infamous for exploring the long and controversial history of shadows, particularly the legacy of Lavater's blatantly racist attempts to define morality through physiognomy, in order to comment on the history of race relations and slavery in America. For Walker (cited in Rutherford 2009: 235), the "power" of a silhouette thus resides in the fact that, in a shadow, one's individuality "makes itself apparent in … both substance and absence".

In her art practice, by "strip[ping] the silhouette back to its bones" (Rutherford 2009: 235), Walker has thus drawn attention to the fact that the seemingly gentle and benign art form of silhouettes as, "pre-photographic forms of portraiture" (Warner 2007: 85), played an important, albeit problematic, role in building a modern sense of self for the West, and America in particular. For silhouettes embodied the "new sense of equal distinctiveness and individuality", the "heightened psychological self-awareness mediated through their physical differences" that distinguished the early eighteenth and late nineteenth-century (Warner 2007: 86). And as Marina Warner (2007:85) suggests, photography simply "matched" the consumer of the silhouette's "hunger for proof of personal distinctiveness". Consequently, like many nineteenth-century optical devices, cutting and interpreting silhouettes became a parlour game, for the silhouette was not simply a form of entertainment, but also "analytical tool" (Warner 2007: 85). Thus having silhouettes cut was often a spectacle, and silhouettists used whatever angle they had to attract new clients, whether it was through personal style or the invention of equipment to increase the speed with which a likeness could be taken (Rutherford 2009: 120).

In light of this, it is interesting that three of my grandfather's silhouettes – John Astley, William Astley and Mary Astley (Fig.28) – were cut by British silhouettist Master William James Hubard (1807-1862), an "infant prodigy" who began cutting silhouettes at the age of twelve (Rutherford 2009: 201). On the back of the silhouette's frames the silhouettist has inscribed, "Cut by that singularly gifted little boy, Master Hubard, without drawing or machine". Consequently, his marketing advantage was not only his age, but also that he cut silhouettes by hand without the aid of optical devices. At the age of 17, Master Hubard could no longer rely on his youth to attract clients, and he subsequently left for America where he set up a travelling gallery cutting silhouettes, often for the Harvard Graduation ceremonies (Rutherford 2009: 201). Eventually he moved into portrait painting and sculpture, setting up his own foundry in Virginia (Rutherford 2009: 204). During the civil war, according to Rutherford (2009: 204), Master Hubard supported the confederates, turning his foundry into a weapons developing factory, and was unfortunately killed by an explosion in his factory. It is due to Rutherford's documentation of Master Hubard's history that I have thus been able to roughly determine the ages at which the silhouettes of John (thirty to thirty-five years old), William (twenty-one to twenty-six years old) and Mary Astley (twenty to twenty-five years old) would have been cut.

Silhouettes, however, have not been taken seriously as an art form in history and have often been viewed as being purely decorative and twee. Rutherford suggests that this may be because they were so affordable and popular. For silhouettes, in comparison to portrait miniatures, were a relatively inexpensive, but accurate and quick form of having one's likeness taken, and like portrait miniatures they had the advantage of being a portable form of portraiture, consequently they became very popular (Rutherford 2009: 120). For example, according to Rutherford (2009: 116), a portrait miniature would cost on average 20 Guineas (R7350), while a silhouette would cost between 2 and 20 shillings (R42 – R315) depending on whether their sitter asked for a simple or bronzed silhouette[11]. Despite the popularity of their art form, silhouettists, unlike many portrait miniaturists, were never invited into the Royal Academy (Rutherford 2009: 116). Silhouette cutting required no formal training in drawing and Rutherford (2009: 141) believes that this, like Lavater's physiognomic theories, may have attributed to the contemporary stigma attached to the silhouette.

Silhouettes, however, were a highly skilled art form, and as Rutherford emphasises, they were an important record of late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century life: of fashion (Fig.32) and class distinctions (Fig.33), occupations (Fig.34-35) and domestic life (Fig.36-37), transport (Fig.38-39) and emigration, of exploration and the nineteenth-century ethnographic curiosity (Fig.40), and of the period's preoccupation with optical devices as both machines of scientific analysis and popular entertainment (Fig.41). Silhouettes were used to capture moments in life, consequently the art form

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[11] Rutherford provided the equivalent values of contemporary British monetary values to shillings and guineas. I have simply used these contemporary values to work out the South African equivalent.

passed out of favour only with the invention of the camera, a mechanical process which made the process of taking a likeness seem more objective for customers. For it was in photography, Rutherford (2009: 225) argues, that "the combination of art and science, which had intrigued the champions of the silhouette for so long, were perfectly harmonized". In fact, as Rutherford demonstrates in her history of the silhouette, many silhouettists became professional photographers.

In light of this, it is interesting that etymologically, 'photography' means "writing or drawing with light" (Stoichita cited in Turner 2007: 69). For this reason, Victor Stoichita (cited in Turner 2007: 69) argues, one could also regard photography as drawing with shadow. Similarly, Ernst Van Alphen (2005: 66) argues that "the throwing of shadows is an act complementary to the shooting of [photographic] images because to shoot an image is to expose an object to light". Like photography, the power of the silhouette thus resides in its origin, in "the light that once played on their subjects and formed their image" (Warner 2007: 89). They are eerie "emanations" of individual presence (Warner 2007: 89). For Roland Barthes, photography simultaneously killed and gave life to its subjects, for photography not only immobilizes, but also preserves a moment in time (Silverman 1996: 199). In light of this, it is interesting that for Kaja Silverman (1996: 199) family is seen as existing in and through the photo album, an object of captured subjects which confers "an actuality and a coherence" on families. The same could be said of my grandfather's silhouettes, for like photographs they are indices of a lost familial history, of ghostly genetic imprints.[12]

In my own creative work, I was initially pedantic about getting the silhouette 'right', but I soon realised that I wasn't so concerned with creating an exact replica, that I was more interested in this process of imagining and constructing an identity, a snapshot of a life, a past through present artefacts. Consequently, unlike in the contemporary art practice of Tim Noble and Sue Webster, shadows are more the starting point than the end point of my ethnographic enquiry into the lost past of my family.

When I started this project I made a simple bust of a head (Fig.42) – based partially on me and partially on an androgynous figures from medical text books – which I then cast so that I could take moulds from it and use the basic structure as an armature for both the male and female silhouettes. Consequently I find it interesting that all the busts somewhat resemble me, emphasising the aspect of imagined family traits. The response from family members has been surprising, however, for they often recognise other family members in my sculptures, particularly my uncle Mark Young who died

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[12] Struck by the similarity between the profiles of the only unnamed silhouette – who I have named The Stranger (Fig.28 & 29) – and Thomas Astley (Fig.28 & 30), I originally assumed that The Stranger was a much younger Thomas Astley. Through my research into the history of silhouettes I now know that this assumption was incorrect, because the amount of bronzing on the silhouette of The Stranger and his acorn frame date him to the early nineteenth century. The back of Thomas Astley's silhouette is inscribed with his name and 'aged 76', which means that his silhouette would only have been cut in the late eighteenth century. Therefore The Stranger is from another generation, and perhaps may have been one of Astley's sons.

tragically (before I was old enough to remember him) and of whom we have very few photographs. This suggests that there may even be a 'genetic imprint' imbedded somehow in one's own profile.

According to Otto Neurath (cited in Pendle 2007: 73), the Austrian designer responsible for the invention of the isotype – the universal silhouette – a silhouette is significant because it "compels us to look at essential details". Consequently, as Warner (2007: 83) argues, it is in silhouettes that an observer can

> play with inverted light and shade, relief and contour, and explore the inherent recognizability of an outline. The onlooker supplies the features from memory, so that the act of looking and filling in the shadow activates his or her own memories. The mind engages strongly with the 'unfinished thing'.

It is in *skiagraphia*, in drawing with shadows, that the observer is thus given the power to flesh out the image "in the light of personal knowledge and fantasy" (Warner 2007: 85). Like Kentridge's shadows, my grandfather's silhouettes thus imply an indirect gaze, giving agency to their observer. Casting myself in the role as beholder of my shadowy ancestry, I have been unable to reference the people from whose likeness these silhouettes were cut, from whom these shadows were cast. My sculptures are thus an entirely personal interpretation of what I imagine their appearance and their character to have been.

Using the objects that they have left behind as a clue to their profession and interests, researching late eighteenth-century fashions and by looking at the heads of Roman sculptures and family members I have attempted to render the busts as realistically as possible from white earthenware clay. For example, Thomas Astley was a watchmaker and an engraver. Using a mantle clock (owned by my grandfather) that he made (Fig. 43) as source material, I have dressed him as a late eighteenth-century tradesman, complete with a Regency pocket watch. This form of the pocket watch was relatively new in the eighteenth century and watches attached to the waist band of the trousers were more popular. The shape of the silhouette, ending just above the waist, unfortunately did not allow for the more popular watch form. As a watchmaker, however, Astley must have made a Regency pocket watch at some point and I have thus painted the face of the sculpture's pocket watch using his own clock's design. Thomas Astley's son, William, was also an engraver. My grandfather owns some of his original copper engraving plates (mostly calling cards, maps, advertisements and a few illustrations for clients). I have explored pressing the clay onto these plates and transferring these images onto the sculpture itself, working them into a fabric design for his clothing.

Ethnographically constructed from two-dimensional sources, the sculptures are thus the three-dimensional embodiment of my imagination, of my construction of a knowledge of the past, of my processes of perception. Referencing Staffordshire figures from the same period, I have painted the brilliance of the white clay in a more illustrative manner to emphasise that the sculptures are the physical embodiment of my imagination. Thus, like Kentridge, my quotation of visual strategies from the past may appear to be nostalgic at first, but the process from which they have been derived has not been un-self-reflexive.

In order to counteract the sentimentality that one might attribute to the sculptures, my installation of the sculptures is designed to be very simple and in keeping with contemporary tendencies for minimal embellishments. Exhibited on a plinth, they are supported by a stand designed to be relatively inconspicuous in relation to the shape of the silhouette cast by the sculptures. Referencing Silverman's interpretation of Lacan's 'image-screen', my sculptures are exhibited behind framed screens – drawing attention to the processes of perception through which the sculptures have been created, and through which they will be observed by others. Lit from behind, the sculptures will be visible thus not only in themselves, but also as a shadow cast onto the screen.

Fascinated by the role of human perception in the construction of knowledge, my research into the history of nineteenth-century optical devices for this thesis has also resulted in a side project, in which I have been playfully experimenting with the concept of curiosity cabinets and dioramas. In an essay for the Getty Museum's *Devices of Wonder* exhibition, Frances Terpak (2001: 148) emphasized the extent to which "natural specimens as objects of study and wonder played an integral part in the intellectual life of early modern Europe", particularly in the nineteenth century. Coinciding with the expansion of European trade in the sixteenth century, the popularity of the curiosity cabinet brought "the wondrous into the world at hand", expanding the limits of European imagination (Terpak 2001: 164). For this reason, the *Devices of Wonder* exhibited the sixteenth century *wunderkammern* as the first optical device. Curiosity cabinets were "spectacle-enclosing boxes" (Stafford 2001: 9) and, in many ways, early dioramas. Although similarly lens-less, because they presented a carefully framed scene as a seemingly neutral "volume of space" (Stafford 2001: 95), nineteenth-century panoramas and dioramas are also regarded as early optical devices. In viewing a late eighteenth century panorama, the observer had to turn their bodies in order to view the entire work. Consequently panoramas were significant in the way that they broke away from the localized point of view provided by perspectival construction. In contrast, Louis Daguerre's early nineteenth century dioramas were controversial in the way that they re-immobilised the observer (Crary 1992: 112). For as Stafford (2001: 99) argues, "the framed diorama was everything that the monumental panorama was not". Not only was it intimate and changeable with lighting, but in the diorama "the desire to collect, classify, and possess me[t] in the arrested instant" of the display (Stafford 2001: 102).

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Treating the book as a curiosity cabinet, as a museum in which opinions and facts are upheld and preserved, I have been replacing the pages of outdated encyclopaedias, textbooks, manuals and a few novels with a 'diorama'. These dioramas have been created using the collage aesthetic, using images taken from within the books themselves and placing them in new contexts. For example, my *Elephantom* (2011) places a mammoth skeleton (taken from a late nineteenth-century encyclopaedia) next to a vase of flowers rendering the once giant animal a ghost of the past, of an extinct idea. The diorama has been set in an outdated *Roget's Thesaurus of English Words and Phrases* (Fig.44). As a visual microcosm of the book, the dioramas thus draw attention to the fact that a book is not only a microcosm of discourses, but in itself is also "a microcosm of the world" (Terpak 2001: 165). Having completed the piece, I realised I had designated the cover of the book a 'screen': a screen through which one not only perceives the world, but also the author's construction of a knowledge of the world. Consequently, like in my sculptural silhouettes, in looking at my curiosity cabinets, the observer will perceive *my* perception of the author's perception of the world.

Today, Terpak (2001: 165) argues, curiosity cabinets are considered works of art, "inviting reflection on the historical, moral and evocative aspects of exploration and classification of knowledge". The ethnographic nature of the curiosity cabinet embodied the human desire to witness, promote and preserve dialogues between what Stafford (2001: 11) refers to as generational continuities and discontinuities. Consequently, as Stafford (2001: 20) argues, the curiosity cabinet - as an instrument of reflection, study and amusement – is a sustained "long cultural conversation". Today's museums and galleries could therefore be regarded as monumental curiosity cabinets and, in many ways, Kentridge's *I am not me, the horse is not mine* is a curiosity cabinet of his fascination with European modernism, the processes of perception and the fragmented subjectivity of humans.

Initially my theoretical and practical work was very discrete. Inspired by Kentridge's use of shadows, I was exploring the potential for knowledge to be found in a shadowy, two-dimensional form. However, it is through my theoretical research they have approached a greater integration, particularly in relation to Nicolas Bourriaud's theory of the contemporary artist-as-anthropologist, Jonathan Crary's case study of the relationship between modernity and subjectivity in the construction of knowledge, and most interestingly, and Kaja Silverman's interpretation of Lacan's othering gaze and the image-screen.

Conclusion

As contemporary objects, my family of ceramic busts are thus not only the product of my ethnographic exploration of a personal past, but are also a meeting point between my perception of the past and the shadow of its reality. My creative work has thus both allowed me to think through and inspired me to further explore the questions of representation and perception that are found in the work of William Kentridge, and his *I am not me, the horse is not mine* in particular.

This thesis has argued that Kentridge's concern with the subjective nature of the construction of knowledge, of the space between seeing and knowing, memory and reality is a central motif in his art practice precisely because it is his personal attempt to reconcile his present with his past. More broadly, however, it could be regarded as an attempt to reconcile South Africa's colonial history with Western history, and European modernism with global postmodernism. Although Kentridge's art practice may no longer be critically regarded as dwelling on the politically, bureaucratically and violently oppressive nature of South Africa's apartheid past, it is in his concern with revolutionary disillusionment and the darker side of European modernity and Enlightenment, as this thesis has demonstrated, that his *I am not me, the horse is not mine* could be regarded as a conceptually and visually Gothic exploration of the darker side of South Africa's democracy. The African National Congress (ANC) government's political and bureaucratic attempts to address past racial inequalities have paradoxically resulted in entrenching them and government figures are more desperately criticised for representing the interests of themselves rather than those of the people whom they are meant to represent. In the face of collapsing democratic ideals, in particular the prospect of media censorship[13], the tendency of South African leaders to refer to each other as 'comrade' is thus not only ironic, but also a symbol of how close South Africa's increasingly oppressive present is growing to that of Soviet Russia, of the gloomy and paranoid Gogolian world in which Kentridge's contemporary Nose runs loose. In light of retired Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu's recent controversial denunciation of the ANC government increasingly conservative and hegemonic policies[14], Kentridge's 2008 film installation could be thus regarded as being before its time, perhaps even prophetic, as a contemporary and 'altermodern' avant-garde piece.

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[13] The South African government is currently attempting to pass the Protection of Information Bill despite consistent appeals from the public and media, both South African and international, due to its undemocratic and therefore unconstitutional nature. The Information Bill would be able to curb the freedom of expression in South African media, particularly by making it illegal to obtain classified state reports. For more information, see: http://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/Information-bill-is-anti-democratic-20110602 (Accessed 2011, October 31).

[14] After the South African government denied the Dalai Llama's application for a visa, Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu's criticism (in which he compared the ANC government to the apartheid regime) of the ANC's decision to protect trade relations with China rather than protect human rights made international news. For more information, see: http://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/We-will-pray-for-ANCs-downfall-Tutu-20111004 (Accessed: 2011, October 31)

In rethinking questions of human subjectivity and perception through the lens of the 'altermodern' and the personal, Kentridge's *I am not me, the horse is not mine* is thus a Gothic and ethnographic visual testimony to the continuing value of European modernity's belief that a person is both the product and the producer of their time, that one cannot begin to describe the future without acknowledging the past. Faced simply with the tools of participant observation, I suggest that the artist is and always has been an ethnographer, a person who uses artefacts from the past and the present to "construct representations of culture" (Van Alphen 2005: 3), which turns on its head Van Alphen's assertion that the "ethnographer-as-observer" is an artist. In my opinion, it also works the other way around. In the broader context of theories of altermodernity and neomodern anthropology, my ethnographic and Gothic reading of *I am not me, the horse is not mine* suggests that artistic freedom and the potential for innovation resides in a self-reflexive recognition that culture does not exist in isolation from politics and economic. For this reason it embraces the notion that all knowledge is, to a certain extent, a subjective construction of what has happened. It is in the dissolution of the boundary between the past and the present – between colonial and postcolonial South Africa, Apartheid and contemporary South Africa, modernism and postmodernism – that Kentridge's art practice recognises that the past is always present and that despite postmodernity's hegemonic claim to 'art for art's sake', the role of the artist will always be burdened by questions of political and social accountability.

Born in 1987, into a generation that was too young to knowingly experience the oppressive politics and bureaucracies of apartheid South Africa, part of a liberal family and having had a liberal and privileged schooling, my experience of apartheid is that of a historical period studied in a classroom, of the legacies that are still perpetuated today. Part of the first generation of Astley, Young and Stuart-Clark descendants to have been born in South Africa, I may have a British passport but I know very little about the past from which I have descended. My British heritage has thus always been a shadowy fragment of myself, an 'exotic' curiosity and thus, for me, an inversion of what has traditionally and Eurocentrically been viewed as strange. In a sense, through my experimentation with shadows and dioramas, I am attempting to return the Eurocentric gaze, rendering my silhouetted family and the objects they left behind, and the contents of old books, ethnographic artefacts. I was, however, not aware of this at first. Using the analytical tools available to me as a contemporary artist – sculpture, lighting, collage and research – I have attempted to make the strangeness of this past familiar and three-dimensional, in order to understand it better. My practical work is thus a personal anthropological enquiry into questions of subjectivity and representation, through an ethnographic quest into the history of my British ancestry – a cathartic, and to a certain extent Gothic, attempt to animate half of my family tree, to understand the lost past from which I derive my present.

Catharsis is traditionally understood in cultural discourse to be "the purification of emotions by vicarious experience" through which one re-establishes an emotion with its cause (*Oxford English Dictionary* 2011: Sv. 'catharsis'). Memory therefore plays an important role in relieving the burden of the past, and therefore of the present. It is thus in acknowledging the role of the artist in the construction of knowledge and of the present, of the fragmented nature of a postmodern postcolonial subjectivity in a South African contemporary cultural context – as demonstrated by the self-reflexive nature of Kentridge's *I am not me, the horse is not mine* – that the possibilities inherent in an 'altermodern' and ethnographic rethinking of subjectivity are cathartic.   It is, thus, in recognizing the fragmentation of the self, the parts from which one has been separated, that one is paradoxically closer to recognizing the self as a whole. In an altermodern context, experiences of the present are no more valuable than experiences of the past. This allows an artist like Kentridge to delve into the past without the negative constraints attached to postmodern conceptions of nostalgia.

For Okwui Enwezor (2009: 34), it is significant that "while film has been moving more towards the image …, [contemporary] art has been going in the opposite direction, fleeing the symbol to confront the real through documentary form". Thus, in the face of conceptual contemporary art, one could argue that William Kentridge's interest in film, and the history of animation in particular, has given him more room to experiment with human perceptions, with unapologetically and self-reflexively re-embodying the subjective nature of vision in his construction of knowledge. Concerned with the potential for enlightenment to be found in darkness, with vision and ambiguity, with the past and the present and with the 'Other' present in oneself, *I am not me, the horse is not mine*'s film fragments work together to demonstrate that Kentridge's preoccupation with European modernism is inseparable from his preoccupation with the processes of perception. Thus *I am not me, the horse is not mine*, as this thesis hopefully demonstrates, does not simply explore the potential for a terrain in which, modernism and postmodernism, the past and the present, can co-exist. Instead, as in Bourriaud's altermodernity, it claims that this terrain already exists.

The ethnographic and Gothic nature of *I am not me, the horse is not mine* may thus make the film fragments seem nostalgic. But if criticisms of the Eurocentric nature of Kentridge's preoccupation with twentieth-century modernism and nineteenth-century attest to anything, it is that in a postmodern context people often confuse an interest in historical aesthetics and practices with sentimentality. Kentridge's consistent and playful experimentation with the processes of perception and the construction of knowledge, in both the past and the present, have thus had a significant influence on both my theoretical and practical outlook.

For this reason, my practical work is, perhaps in spite of itself, a "sentimental imagining or evocation" of a lost past (*Oxford English Dictionary* 2011: Sv. 'nostalgia'). Through the self-reflexive way in which the sculptures and dioramas have been derived and in the manner in which they are installed, my ethnographic enquiry does not, however, intend to romanticise the past nor does it ignore the problems inherent in South Africa's colonial occupation by European powers and the consequential 'exoticization' of South African traditional culture and the 'racialization' of its policies. Instead it is an attempt, and perhaps a futile attempt, to grasp at my family's past before they arrived in South Africa, to explore the personal fragments of my own experience of this country. By experimenting with the silhouettes and the lost past of these family shadows, with their indirect gaze and the notion of the screen through which I perceive and construct a knowledge of them, my work, in a contemporary South African cultural context, refuses to be apologetic for my European roots. Instead, my practical work attempts to set these roots in motion.

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Appendix

Fig.1

Fig.2

Fig.3

Fig.4
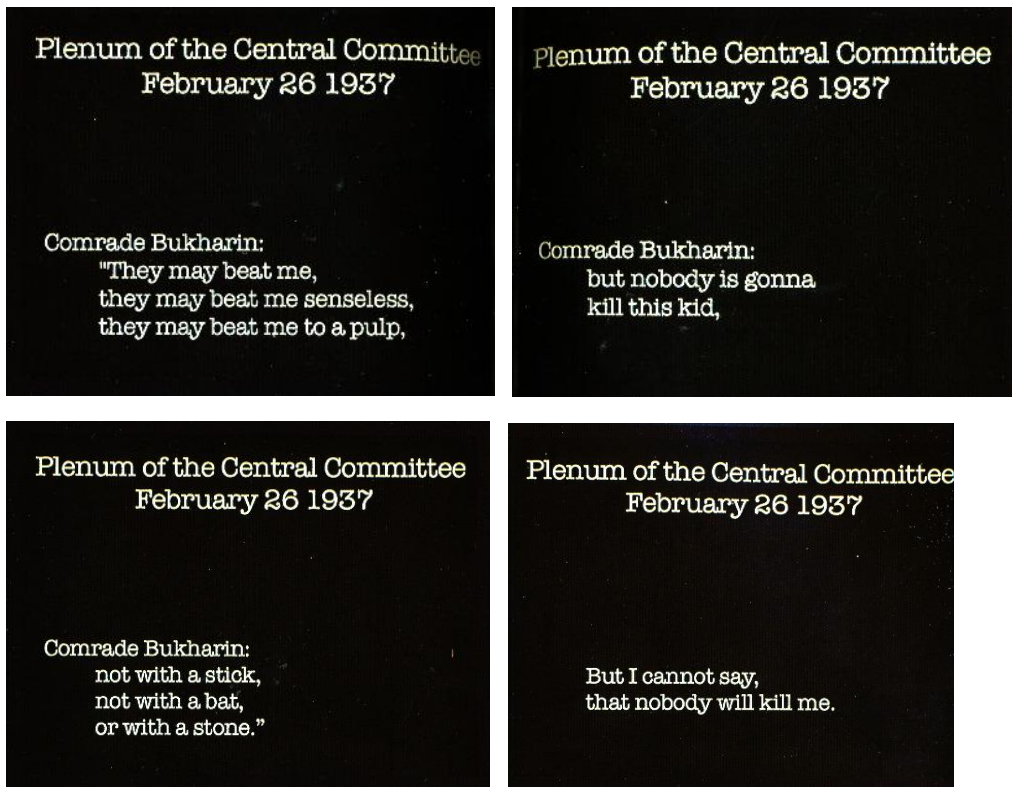
Fig.5

Fig.6

Fig.7

Fig.8
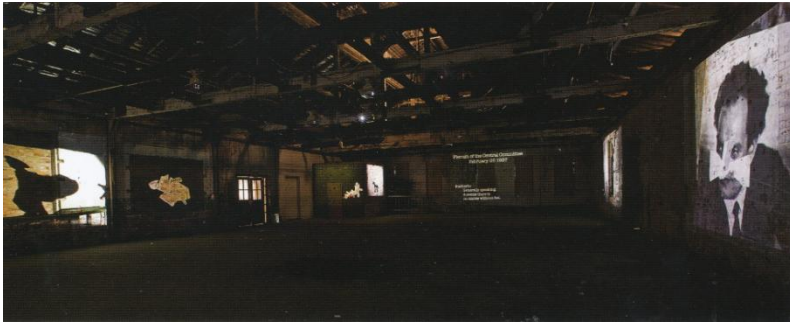
Fig.9

Fig.10

Fig.11

Fig.12

Fig.13
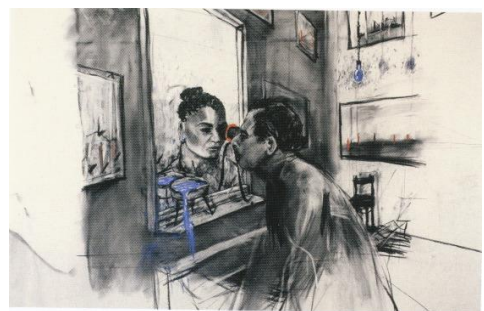
Fig.14

Fig.15

Fig.16
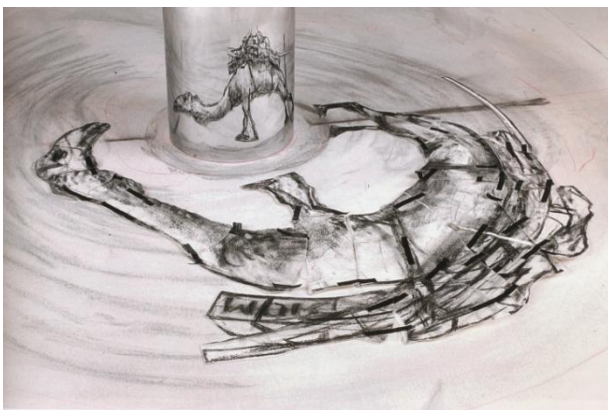
Fig.17

Fig.18
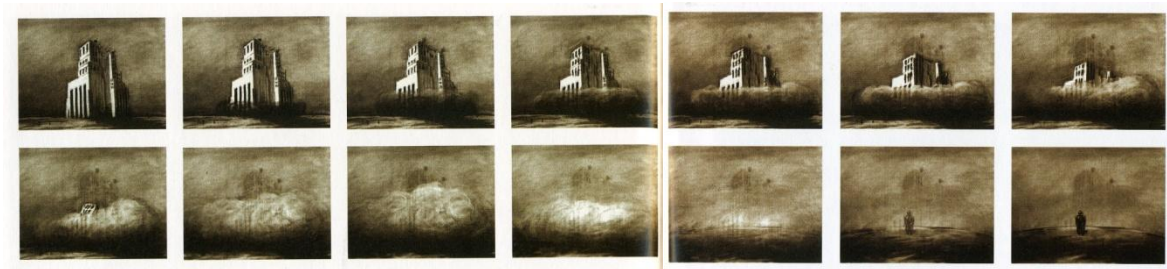
Fig.19

Fig.20

Fig.21

Fig.22
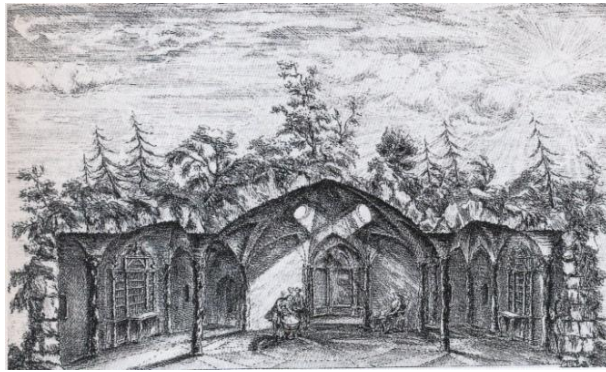
Fig.23

Fig.24

Fig.25

Fig.26

Fig.27

Thomas Astley

The Stranger

John Astley

William Astley

Mary Astley (Smith)

Thomas Young

Janet Young (Brown)

Robert Young

William Young

Fig.28

63
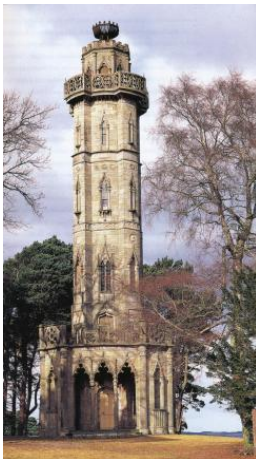
Fig.29

Fig.30
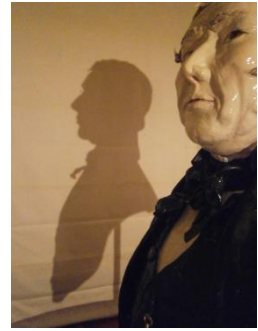
Fig.31
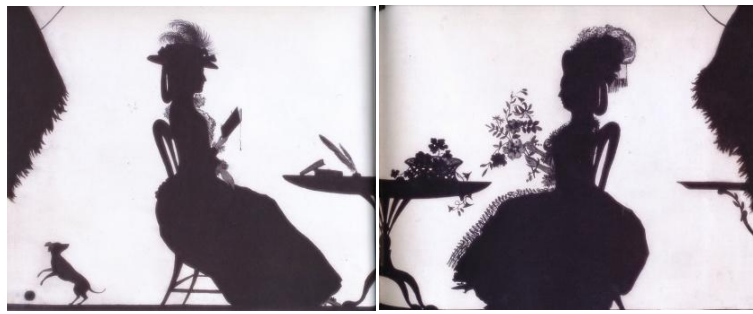
Fig.32

Fig.33

Fig.34

Fig.35

Fig.36

Fig.37
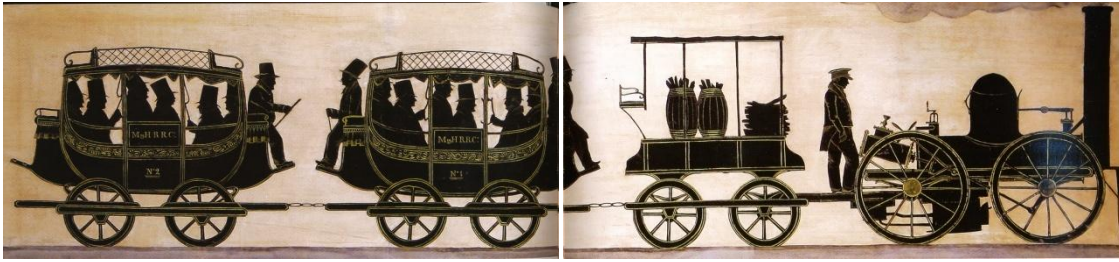
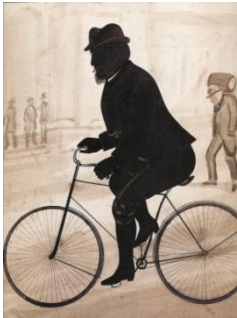**Fig.38**

Fig.39

Fig.40

Fig.41

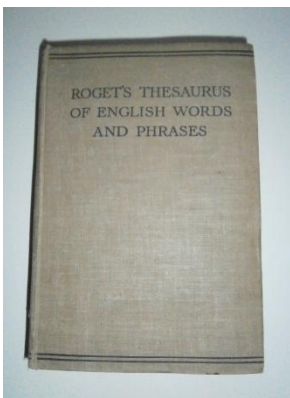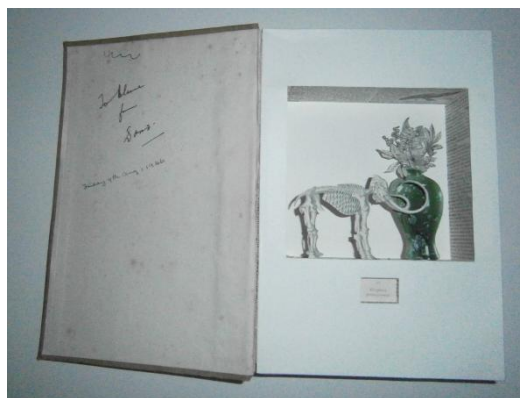
Fig.42

Fig.43

Fig.44

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