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Fake Memory

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- Programme and other information online at www.uj.ac.za/sociology -

Fake Memory [1]

David William Cohen, 13 March 2010

At a precipice. Fake memory. To one side, a gorge filling with broken stories, historical fictions, counterfeit memoirs, inventions, frauds, discredited claims, fake memories. To the other side, finders of fact, debunkers, critics, historians, truth finders, vexed audiences. Where to stand?

* * *

It was for Oprah Winfrey one of the greatest love stories ever told. Every day, for months, a young girl sends apples over a fence at Buchenwald to a boy, an inmate of the concentration camp.

> Almost 15 years later, Herman was living and working in New York City. A friend set him up on a blind date with a woman named Roma Radzika. Herman says he was immediately drawn to her. When they began talking about their lives, Roma asked Herman where he was during World War II. "I said, 'In a concentration camp,'" he says. "And then she says, 'I came to a camp and I met a boy there and I gave him some apples and I sent them over the fence.'
>
> "And suddenly it hit me like a ton of bricks. And I said to her, 'There was a boy? Was he tall?' And she said, 'Yes.' I said, 'And one day he told you not to come around anymore because he's leaving?' And she says, 'Yes.' I said, 'That boy was me.'
>
> Roma and her family had moved from Poland to Germany, using forged papers to hide that they were Jewish. They lived on a farm next to Herman's camp, posing as Christians to avoid being captured. Roma says when she brought apples and bread for Herman, he used to say, "I'll see you tomorrow."
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> "Well, what can I tell you? I proposed right then and there," Herman says. "I said, 'Look, I'll never let you go anymore. ... Now that we're free we're going to be together forever.'" [2]

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[1] As may become clear, this text comprises a piece of a larger manuscript in progress and also (pp. 6-11) a description of that larger manuscript. As this is a draft, please do not cite without permission. The workshop of the Doctoral Program in Anthropology and History discussed an earlier version of this paper in March 2009. The seminar of the Archives and Public Culture project at the University of Cape Town discussed a later version, March 11, 2010. I am grateful to participants in both sessions for their ranging and insightful comments.

This is the story of the lives of Herman and Roma that Herman Rosenblat tells in his memoir, *Angel at the Fence: The True Story of a Love that Survived*, to be published February 2009. But in December, 2008, a slew of articles reported questions about Herman's story. On December 27, after some weeks defending his story as true to his memory of his experience at Buchenwald and of his love for Roma formed across the fence, Herman admitted that some of his story was not true. . .it was in part invented. The publisher, a subsidiary of Penguin, withdrew the book; a film project well underway was thrown into doubt; and, by mid-January, Oprah Winfrey had withdrawn her support for the book. According to her web-site, Oprah was very disappointed. "That's what happens with lies. . .they get bigger and bigger." In his own statement of contrition, Rosenblat used different language: "I wanted to bring happiness to people, to remind them not to hate, but to love and tolerate all people. . .In my dreams, Roma will always throw me an apple, but I now know it is only a dream."

Drawing on the sleuthing of historian Kenneth Waltzer [3] and others, Gabriel Sherman's articles in *The New Republic* (December 25-26, 2008) [4] doomed *Angel at the Fence* as a fraud. Sherman broke open the detailed story of how a fabrication came to enjoy, if only briefly, the treasures associated with the status of a claim to truth. Yet doubts about Herman's story circulated for years among Herman's family members and friends, and beyond. In early December 2007, Deborah Lipstadt (the Emory historian who had won an extraordinary victory in a lawsuit brought by David Irving against her and her book *Denying the Holocaust* [5]) drew attention to

> a Holocaust story making the rounds on the Internet which is clearly not true. It's about an inmate of a camp [a sub-camp of Buchenwald] who connects with a young girl outside the camp. She throws him an apple everyday over the fence. He tells her one day in May 1945 that she should not throw any more apples because at 10 a.m. the next morning he has appointment to appear at the gas chamber to be killed. This story has so many shortcomings that one hardly knows where to begin. [6]

For Waltzer, Lipstadt, and for other researchers, the problem with the Rosenblat tale was not only that it was not true, but that such fabrications of Holocaust experience feed the production of Holocaust denying.

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[2] "Love Lessons from Amazing Couples." *The Oprah Winfrey Show.* http://www.oprah.com/slideshow/oprahshow/slideshow1_ss_rel_20071114

[3] "MSU prof debunks concentration camp love story." http://special.news.msu.edu/holocaust/camp.php

[4] The first article appeared under the title "The Greatest Love Story Ever Sold" on December 25; the second as "Wartime Lies" on the 26th.

[5] *Denying the Holocaust: the growing assault on truth and memory* . New York: Plume, 1994. And, also Lipstadt's account of the lawsuit: *History on trial: my day in court with David Irving*. New York, N.Y: ECCO, 2005

[6] http://lipstadt.blogspot.com/

> Not only do we need to be historically accurate for the simple sake of history. But on top of that, this kind of stuff is fodder for deniers. There are many amazing stories about the Holocaust. Just the fact that some people managed to survive this hell is amazing in and of itself. We don't need embellished and/or false stories. The truth is far more than enough. [7]

In the February 15, 2009, *Observer*, Elizabeth Day provided a long account of the rise and fall of apples over the fence, an account that leans a bit more empathetically towards Rosenblat's theme of contrition than to Oprah's recant of her endorsement and her indictment of Rosenblat as a teller of lies. [8] Day tells not only the stories of the war-time lives of Herman Rosenblat and Roma Radzicki, echoing the factualism of Rosenblat's truth-seeking critics, but also *the story of the story* of the apples over the fence that Herman began to tell in the 1990s, with some hesitation. It was a story which is said to have won an award as a best Valentine's Day short story (reportedly appearing in *the New York Post* in 1995 [9]), and then later the story invited two visits to The Oprah Show, a publishing contract (actually two, as a children's book *Angel Girl* was published in September 2008), and a film project. Where the truth-finders sought experts on the Holocaust to test the verisimilitude of Herman's account of his concentration camp experience, Day interviewed Rosenblat's friends and family members and drew a portrait of a story of a story emerging amid memories of broken childhoods and war-time trauma (and also late life trauma), the experiences of living in a social world where stories matter and where stories that matter are also commodified. Day shifts attention from the problem of truth to the question of the production of stories.

> . . .and it strikes me that, with all the fabrications and lies that he built up around him, maybe the saddest realisation is that Herman Rosenblat did not believe his own survival was story enough. [10]

* * *

To the one side, *Angel at the Fence* finds its way into the abyss of fakes, frauds, and invented histories. There it joins not only works that fell from the vaunted heights

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[7] http://lipstadt.blogspot.com/ December 2, 2007.

[8] "When one extraordinary life story is not enough." *The Observer.* February 15, 2009. http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2009/feb/15/herman-rosenblat-oprah-winfrey-hoax/ In one its accounts of the fall of *Angel*, *The New York Times* reported the views of Haris Salomon, the producer of a proposed film based on the Rosenblat story: "If we were talking about the horrors of the Holocaust and life in the concentration camp being incorrect, that would be something entirely different. . .But we are debating an apple being thrown over the fence." December 30, 2008. http://www.nytimes.com/2008/12/31/books/31opra.html?_r=1&emc=eta1

[9] I haven't been able to find the *Post* article, only countless references to it.

[10] http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2009/feb/15/herman-rosenblat-oprah-winfrey-hoax/

of the Oprah book lists but also the roster [11] of fabrications and distortions of Holocaust experience. For sure, the list will grow beyond *Angel. . .*Wilkomirski's *Fragments* (1996) [12] and Defonseca's *Misha* (1997) are already well established entries. [13] While taken together with invented narratives of ghetto life, exotic travel, and drug addiction, these memoirs suggest an emergent industry of fakes. And while they suggest the particular vulnerability of memories of childhood to embellishment and counterfeiting, [14] these works vary considerably in the ways that they claim truth while

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[11] I am struck by the ways in which the published accounts of the *Angel at the Fence* "fraud" append lists of other defrocked Holocaust memoirs to which *Angel* is then attached. These rosters are reminiscent of lists of assassination victims in Kenya, augmented and then published with each new addition and on each next anniversary date of the killing. The roster becomes a sign, connoting something larger than the names or titles inscribed.

[12] Ross Chambers has done an extraordinary reading of *Fragments*, leveraging the knowledge of it as a fake to read over the shoulder of the actual writer, Bruno Dösseker, and see the work as an expression of the fostering of orphaned memory, memory destroyed, memory beyond reach. Chambers offers that "foster-writing" (an expression he applies to the Dösseker/Wilkomirski *Fragments*), while flawed, improbable, and fake, provides something that "more straightforwardly truthful, testimonies are precluded from subserving by virtue of their very honesty and authenticity." (99) What this is, for Chambers, is a "haunting" that forces the reader to imagine what would have been "a child's experience of Nazi persecution and the camps". Authentic and inauthentic testimonies, memoirs, he points out, are all "haunted by orphaned memories—by the silenced voices of whose who died. . ." (99) "Orphaned Memories, Foster-Writing, Phantom Pain: *The Fragments* Affair. In, Nancy K. Miller and Jason Tougow, *Extremities: Trauma, Testimony and Community* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 92-111. I am grateful to Kylie Thomas for this reference.

[13] Leigh Gilmore has been examining the reception of James Frey's *A Million Little Pieces* (New York: Random House, 2003), its rise to public acclaim and then collapse as a factual account of a man's experiences with drugs, rehabilitation, and the law. Gilmore, in remarks presented at the University of Michigan, March 2, 2009, looks closely at the Oprah link—Frey appeared on her couch twice, once when Oprah was surrounding the book with her support and then again when his account had been recognized as a pack of fabrications. Gilmore is also looking at the ways in which Oprah's embrace of books of redemption has unfolded, the ways in which her self-presentation becomes a part of the performance of redemption, and the ways in which Oprah's embrace of phony memoirs has been, critique, caricatured, and satirized, including in a poignant episode of *South Park*, "A Million Little Fibers" (Episode 144, April 19, 2006): http://www.southparkstudios.com/clips/104285/ http://www.southparkstudios.com/clips/155235/ http://www.southparkstudios.com/clips/155228 .Gilmore's interest here is in the rise of the American memoir of redemption and its redrawing the boundaries of history and fiction, and of course, the role of media in the commodification of memory. See also, Gilmore's *The Limits of Autobiography: Trauma and Testimony* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), especially chapter one, "Representing Yourself," 16-44.

[14] The present paper was drafted in early 2009 for the Workshop of the University of Michigan's Doctoral Program in Anthropology and History, and drew energy from the immediate tumult around the fall of the Rosenblat memoir, its demise coming in the wake of a number of other extraordinary stories of ordinary people in terrible situations. More recently, in a January 2010 *The New Yorker* (January 25, 2010, 68-74) book review essay, Daniel Mendelsohn has similarly called attention to the "bewildering onslaught of

delivering fiction, in the ways that agents, publishers, publicists, and authors seek to sustain the virtues of the works, and in the ways that their respective claims to truth have been taken down by varied repertoires of expertise. To the other side, one sees the powers of surveillance and critical forensics that have developed around the policing of Holocaust memory and around the policing of memoir and autobiography more generally. The Holocaust memoir leaves no negotiable space. It is true or it is not.

Yet Elizabeth Day's account of the story of Herman Rosenblat's memory opens a space for further inquiry and reflection. How do fake memories travel through people's lives and what work do they do on their odd journeys? Day's reading of the Rosenblat story invites inspection of the argument, the presumption, that any account other than truth can only serve the purposes of the Holocaust deniers. It begs for further inspection of the argument that truth is enough, or "more than enough," of what is needed to grasp the meaning and preserve the memory of the Holocaust. Daniel Mendelsohn, in describing the beginnings of his "search for six of the six million," marks his childhood memory:

> When I was six or seven or eight years old, it would occasionally happen that I'd walk into a room and certain people would begin to cry. [15]

For his relatives in Miami Beach, young Daniel seemed to remind them of their Shmiel, Daniel's grandfather's eldest brother, who with his wife and four daughters were exterminated by the Nazis. Here, it was a look, a manner of being in the presence of others, which restored memory and evoked trauma, loss, and history. Not a fake, as far as we know, but where are "the facts" in this passageway via which the Holocaust is carried with meaning across generations?

Relevant here is Monica Patterson's work on the memories of childhood trauma in the transition from apartheid, and the complexities of memory, expression, and representation in settings where children were both perpetrators and victims, where experts enter the equation through speaking both for and about, and where the truth of experience may be second to rehabilitation and reconciliation. And, there is the challenge of getting to knowledge across time, across the distinctions between actual and constructed childhoods and the memory work of adults recovering their childhood experience. [16]

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phony-memoir revelations that were made within weeks of one another." (72) Mendelsohn was offering an extended reading of Ben Yagoda's *Memoir: A History* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2009). Yagoda's book provides an extensive discussion of the defrocking of memoirs across time.

[15] *The Lost: A Search for Six of the Six Million*. New York: Harper Collins, 2006. 3.

[16] See Patterson's contribution—"Childhood, Memory and Gap: Reflections from an Anthro-historian on George Perec's *W or the Memory of Childhood*"—in Chandra Bhimull, et al., eds., *Anthrohistory: Unsettling Knowledge and the Question of Discipline* (manuscript in process, 2008-9).

Day's reading is also an opening to the histories and contextual politics of practices to claiming of truth, objectivity, and fact, as Peter Novak [17] and Mary Poovey [18] have done. More so, there is the opportunity to recognize the ways in which such stories--constructed and reconstructed memory—work, how they unfold, are taken up, held dear (by some), and then discarded and pulped like the books abandoned by their publishers. . .the truth of memory in all its produced qualities and fates. . .the willfulness and impunity of truth [19]. . .and the ways that claims to truth produce histories, meanings, understandings. [20]

Years ago, someone living in an East Coast city told me that her most persistent dream through childhood and adulthood was of a terrifying moment when gestapo troopers came into her bedroom and carried her away. She had lost no known relative in the Holocaust and knew of no one who had actually lost anyone in the Holocaust and no one she knew had every been carried from their homes in such a terrifying way. Yet she experienced the horror for years and years. [21] What sort of fake is this memory that runs through someone's life and carries suffering onwards to generations far removed from events where, now, "facts" are closely checked?

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[17] *That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988.

[18] *A History of the Modern Fact: Problems of Knowledge in the Sciences of Wealth and Society.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998.

[19] I attempted to unravel and reconstruct the constitution of a "truth" within the context of investigations of the disappearance and death of Kenyan Minister of Foreign Affairs Robert Ouko in February 1990. See "In a Nation of White Cars. . .One White Car, or 'A White Car,' Becomes a Truth." In Luise White, Stephan Miescher, and David William Cohen, eds. *African Words, African Voices: Critical Practices in African History*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2001, 264-80; see also David William Cohen and E. S. Atieno Odhiambo, *The Risks of Knowledge: Investigations into the Death of the Hon. Minister John Robert Ouko in Kenya, 1990.* Athens. OH: Ohio University Press, 2004, chaps. 4 and 11.

[20] Mendelsohn (*The New Yorker*, January 25, 2010, 70) observes that "the reactions to phony memoirs often tell us more about the tangled issues of veracity, mendacity, history, and politics than the books themselves do."

[21] When I heard this I recalled, with the intervening assistance of Keith Shear, Monica Hunter's observation from Pondoland in South Africa of the 1930s: "In collective dreams, I found that by far the most frequent motif was a police raid." *Reaction to Conquest: Effects of Contact with Europeans on the Pondo of South Africa* (London: Oxford University Press, 2nd ed. 1961), and by extension, to Luise White's question: "What better way to reexamine the way historians have thought about evidence, reliability, and truth than by studying the history of things that never happened?" *Speaking with Vampires: Rumor and History in Colonial Africa*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000, xii. Adam Ashforth, with his *Madumo: A Man Bewitched* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), has sought to open a space for understanding the work of witchcraft and, by extension, the challenges for scholars of making sense, and evaluating the force, of things outside the normal and naturalized registers of social phenomena. See his "Relational Sociology Run off the Rails, or: How Chuck Tilly Helped me Understand Spiritual Insecurity in Soweto." *Contention, Change, and Explanation: A Conference in Honor of Charles Tilly.* New York: Social Science Research Council, 2008.

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"Fake memory" is a fragment of an on-going, perhaps unending, book project. The book manuscript has had an interested publisher and a sometimes insistent editor, and a flagrantly derelict author. The manuscript has a working title *History and Anthropology; Historical Anthropology: The Idea of the Thing Itself*.

There is an irresolvable question of historical anthropology. It is, simultaneously, tangible, a field of scholarly work connecting the disciplines, pushing new approaches and questions; and yet, at the same time, its constitution is uncertain and unsettled, absent of a distinctive professional culture, without methodological or epistemological essentialism, barely reflective of the character of an academic discipline, albeit many efforts, both transient and enduring, to transfigure the promise of a dynamic and productive historical anthropology into formal programs of training and certification.

The frame *historical anthropology* announces the interdisciplinary. Certain works of scholarship claim derivation from the intersections of anthropology and history. Scholarship of varying orientation and intention may be ascribed to a conjuncture of the two disciplines. At one glance, such scholarship located amidst the intersections of anthropology and history may suggest a unique discipline in the making; at another, such scholarship may be rather more salutary of broader shifts in the topographies of knowledge production and reproduction globally than of the unfolding of a specific conjuncture. Yet, on deeper reflection, the scholarship emergent at the intersections of anthropology and history may suggest trajectories of scholarly research and reflection that are simultaneously transcendent and uncertain.

There is an argument. After some fifty years of dynamic romance, the disciplines are in a relationship that challenges straightforward representation; that remains unsettled in its historical constitution; and, above all else, that appears unsteady in its relationship to a future. At another glance, the qualities of instability and uncertainty, the very inchoateness of this realm of work hold the promise of continuing to be productive.

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The manuscript draws in part on material discussed in working in graduate seminars and workshops in anthropology and history since the early 1970s; and on two or three iterations of an undergraduate course "introduction to historical anthropology." The manuscript is also inevitably, and hopefully productively, in conversation with the series of conferences, workshops, and editorial meetings among students and faculty associated with Michigan's Doctoral Program in Anthropology and History, which has led to a collective volume, *Anthrohistory: Unsettled Knowledge and the Question of Discipline*. [22]

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[22] Forthcoming University of Michigan Press.

My proposed manuscript pursues goals: to grasp essential questions and qualities that mark scholarship configured along the conjuncture of the disciplines of anthropology and history; to gain a sense of critical practices and procedures of work associated or associable with the conjuncture; to consider the force of professional discipline in the works of producing and reproducing knowledge; and to search out more open ranges of interpretative practice, narrative, and theory beyond, and yet critical to, the itineraries and fates of disciplines.

* * *

There is a fantasy about usefulness. [23] To begin with, it is hoped that this volume will be of use to those who are taking up scholarly training and research and who wish to engage directly--What is this stuff? How do you do it?--some of the innovative or experimental approaches and methods that have developed along the notional interstices of the two disciplines. It may also find readers interested in questions of interdisciplinarity in the humanities and the social sciences and readers interested still more broadly in higher education. What is the value of interdisciplinarity? Where does it fit into the university? How are these questions to be addressed, even formed, in contexts of intensive claiming of scarce resources?

There is more. Over the past few years (as the idea of this book has percolated), I have been a bit observant of anthropology students and of some more seasoned scholars active in the field. I have sensed--and "sensed" is probably too passive a term as what has been observed is startling in its clarity-- that graduate students in anthropology are not getting much constructive, imaginative, or even discernible guidance on how to work "history" into their research and their dissertations. In a way, in spite of all the shifts and all the programmatic overtures and developments, the questions of representing, narrativizing, and explaining change still hang over much of the work that anthropologists take pride in producing.

Historians have found anthropologists' approaches and insights intriguing and have explicitly adapted some of this into historical scholarship, rendering some openings to an historical anthropology. Recently, at the University of Michigan, a distinguished scholar in [24] the field of American cultural history noted the important moment for the so-called "cultural turn" in the early 1970s when American historians were drawn to the insights of Clifford Geertz's *The Interpretation of Culture* (1973), taking up hermeneutical approaches to experience, finding value in unsettling, and departing from, social history's engagement with the material conditions of life. What

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[23] There abbreviated remarks and reflections draw on a longer piece requested by an interested editor of a university press who wanted a statement about the potential audience, uses, and market for this proposed book.

[24] For a lucid reading of one important episode of appropriation of anthropology by American historians, see Ronald G. Walters, "Signs of the Times: Clifford Geertz and Historians," *Social Research*, 47:3 (!980: Autumn), 537-56.

was left unsaid is that American historians, in their attraction to certain contemporary anthropological approaches, hardly paid attention to the rigorous critiques of Geertz circulating among anthropologists themselves becoming more attentive to the effects of broad global forces on the material conditions of everyday life. In this selective romance with anthropology (or with the thinking of a few anthropologists), American historians may have unwittingly laid the foundations of their own more recently announced crises of confidence in the future of American cultural history. Beyond the fate of interrogating the results of specific exchanges. . .at the ways historians read their key anthropological interlocutors. . .one can ask if there are enough examples of exchanges that channel productive intersections with anthropological scholarship.

Yes, there are examples of important exchanges of anthropology and history [25] and one could make the case that the dalliances to date have moved each of the disciplines. But, while "the disciplines" have moved, they are not necessarily closer.

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With *History and Anthropology; Historical Anthropology: The Idea of the Thing Itself*, I am trying to find, to define, this delicate space of further inquiry and reflection into the status and contingencies of truth, into the public autopsies of the corpses of private and public memory, of the nature of history production as it moves among spaces of experience, remembrance, narration, and deconstruction and along conduits of thought, talk, story-telling, and publication. All of this has been taken on in work claiming the status of, or ascribed as, historical anthropology, anthropological history, or anthrohistory. The manuscript acknowledges a space beyond the disciplines of anthropology and history, yet engaged with both, while sensitive to the multiple sites and contexts of knowledge production in which there are anxieties, some appropriate, over the authority of disciplinary and scholarly expertise and the status of knowledge

The book comes from somewhere. Out of Africa? I acknowledge the pertinence of my own field of history in centering questions of historical production and the powers convoked by uncertainty. At least in terms of its professional entry into the North American, European, and African universities, African history is a young field. The new African historiography beginning in the late 1950s was of course built upon ground long cultivated by anthropologists though early African historians of this new project did not

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[25] One most recent volume is Andrew Willford and Eric Tagliacozzo, eds. *Clio/Anthropos: Exploring the Boundaries between History and Anthropology*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009. The cover material carries the following description: "The intersection between history and anthropology is more varied now than it has ever been—a look at the shelves of bookstores and libraries proves this. Historians have increasingly looked to the methodologies of anthropologists to explain inequalities of power, problems of voicelessness, and conceptions of social change from an inside perspective. And ethnologists have increasingly relied on longitudinal visions of their subjects, inquiries framed by the lens of history rather than purely structuralist, culturalist, or functionalist visions of behavior."

always know how to engage with anthropology, except typically in some negative dialectic. A young field distinctive for its new questions, new approaches, new frameworks of interpretation (partly out of refusal to accept openings that many gifted anthropologists offered—wittingly and unwittingly--for an understanding of Africa's past), African historiography reflects the most unsettled of epistemic grounds as well as the rich possibilities of an evolving scholarship. The "unsettled" state of knowledge is not a cause for despair but rather an opening to examine the ways in which knowledge of Africa has been produced. Scholarship on Africa is also marked by a sensitivity to the pluriversal or multiversal character of knowledge production across the world, more particularly to the frames of authority that are located beyond their own formative institutions, beyond their own discipline, beyond the academy itself.

* * *

A final ambit. This book develops from a sense that the experimentation and innovation at the conjuncture of these disciplines invite a cluster of questions about knowledge, learning. Is knowledge about the world or of the world, reflecting the world back onto scholarship, or producing the world through scholarship? Can it be apart from the world? Can it be of the world? Is it a conceit, or a deception, to imagine that it is one or the other? The intersections, explicit or implicit, among producers, audiences, actors, and subjects emerge in challenging density and complexity in scholarship running between the disciplines. If the conjugations of anthropological and historical practice have a critical core, it is not the time-space conjuncture, or the field-archive nexus, or the experience-document question but rather the ethical circumstances constituted among producers, audiences, and subjects of knowledge production that shape the fate of knowledge production and reproduction in the world.

* * *

At this point, "Fake Memory" is located in the chapter of the book manuscript known as "Knots and Layers," provisionally in the third of five proposed chapters:

1. Between/Outside/Apart
2. Itineraries and Threads
3. Knots and Layers
4. The Dead
5. Ethic.

1. *Between/Outside/Apart* seeks to challenge the uncontested privilege of the disciplines in the ways in which the moves to historical anthropology have been represented. It suggests that important questions and approaches within the scholarly practice of historical anthropology are signaled, supported, and worked out through intellectual and political currents beyond the academy. As historical anthropologists have sought "other stories" to produce more nuanced, more complex, and more substantial views of the past, we may need other and different stories to narrate the unfolding of work of historical anthropology. There is opportunity in suspending the presumption that the space of interdisciplinary conjuncture—of the possible unfolding

of an anthropological history or an historical anthropology—is about a remapping of disciplines, about the mutual transgressions of a disciplinary borderland by anthropologists and historians. These developments unfold in a larger compass of interpretative and political transformation.

2. *Itineraries and Threads* identifies multiple and divergent threads of scholarship that are called up as anthropological history and historical anthropology. To the one side, there are questions regarding an epistemic consistency among works emergent at the verges of the disciplines. Attention to some of the quite remarkable achievements of works of scholarship—called up as anthropological history and historical anthropology— in taking apart broadly held assumptions regarding culture and historical change draw from different ranges of work, different influences. The often unrecognized reproductions of prior models are examined both in terms of the critique of literature called up as anthropological history and historical anthropology and also in reference to the striking achievements of anthropologists and historians in locating and comprehending the force of early models and structures in the fates of knowledge of later circumstances and factors. Here, the question of discipline as a particular artifact of a place and name is situated as a question for anthropology and history.

3. *Knots and Layers*—the locus of "fake memory"--identifies some of the critical challenges unfolding in the intersections of anthropologists and historians, including questions of space-time conjunctures, the multiplication of sites and moments of observation and interpretation, the problem of taste, the unsettled status of truth, and alternative textualities that have arisen in the setting of shifting topographies of knowledge (in the post-orient and post-colonial). Beyond the critique of disciplines and other institutions of authority and regulation, this is a call for an alternative space, and an alternative radical politics of representation, interpretation, theorization, and narration, one in which there is a strong sense of responsibility located in the relationships of observer and observed as well as in the relationships between author and audience. Responsibility is not only to be found in the practices of observation, analysis, representation, and narrativization, it is also indelibly hinged to the very materials with which scholars work, binding the fates of scholar and subject.

4. *The Dead* complicate the work of the living, not only in the absences of knowing that metaphorical lost briefcases represent, but also in underlining the critical position of memory in the interchanges of anthropology and history and, more so, the critical position of *the dead* in the constitution of an ethic touching, perhaps guiding, and demanding common work of anthropologists and historians that would develop beyond the protocols of the two disciplines. As important seeds of the work of *micro-histoire* are to be found in the struggles to derive understanding and meaning from the genocide in Europe ("the Holocaust"), so anthropologists and historians have found a common project in the application of scholarship to making meaning, reproducing understanding, from the ashes of terror and destruction.

5. *Ethic* develops the case that the conjuncture of anthropology and history may best be seen as an emergent ethic, a way of seeing, understanding, explaining, and representing that comes from the challenges of producing scholarship about and of the world, while

comprehending the multiple sites and modes of producing knowledge in the past and across the world. The potential powers of historical anthropology may unfold not only from the critical position occasioned in its position between two disciplines, and not only in its absence of disciplinary configuration, but also from the animation of new standpoints and fresh logics, including the exploration of the pluriversal, and other frames of knowledge standing outside the built structures that have actively privileged the "universal" values descending from the Enlightenment; a growing attention to and understanding of the powers and poetics of uncertainty; the continuing development of alternative radical politics, embodying a strong sense of responsibility to the subjects and audiences of anthropological and historical investigation; and a renewed sense of the particular responsibilities that bind our fates with those of our subjects. Earlier work on *the production of history* provided a frame through which to observe and engage the contexts and labors of professionals and publics caught up in programs and projects of historical production. The *production* frame was intended to construct a space for further exchange, and more self-aware and self-critical work, moving among anthropologists and historians. Here, there is a specific place for a project of *historical anthropology* amid recognition of the constitutive work of uncertainty, of unsettled accounts; and with recognition of the forces unleashed in the dialogics of multiple and contending narratives, alternative and multiversal perspectives, complex subjectivities. This is not a program conceived to attend to the margins left to the side of the mainstreams of disciplines; rather, the idea is to attend to the fault-lines of certainties and to the limits of institutions, protocols, and disciplines formed and reproduced in the logic of certainty.

* * *

At this precipice, how do we stand? This is the question introduced by this brief sally into "fake memory". "Fake memory" suggests both the universal standards available to consider the authority of history and the culturally sensitive, relativized and sometimes intersubjective frames through which histories travel and exercise influence. "Fake memory" unveils regimes of control of knowledge and expertise and also the economies of commodification that transform stories into monetized values. The arts and sciences of finding truth, of reckoning the non-negotiability of truth, can lead in different directions, so much so that it is difficult to grasp the intersecting threads among the processes of truth-and-reconciliation in South Africa and elsewhere, commissions of inquiry into unsolved mysteries in Kenya and 9/11, congressional and judicial inquiries into Bush-directed rendition, debates over the complicity with state security practices of Christa Wolf and Milan Kundera, arguments about invention and accuracy that unfold almost naturally around the production and screening of "historical" films, [26] and such revelatory research as that which has recently raised questions about the representations of origins and childhood of Gustavus Vassa (Olaudah Equiano) in the much acclaimed 1789 account of the life of an African within

[26] For a book length discussion of the question of film and historical truth, see Natalie Zemon Davis, *Slaves on Screen: Film and Historical Vision*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000.

the experience of the Atlantic slave trade. [27] I am taken by the efforts of the late writer, scholar, and poet W. G. Sebald [28] to test the possibilities of a mobility of interpretative position at once archival and creative, at once memoir and travelogue. . .in ways freeing historical reflection from the tendencies to seek solid ground, fixed perspective. . .unmaking the certitudes and procedures of historical reconstruction with the purpose of offering a an alternative mode of grieving the German destruction of European Jewry. The thread that carries the reader through a Sebald text is not an explicit argument, nor is it a single domain of observation, nor any familiar temporal scale of analysis. Sebald's narrator seems always in motion, unsettled, on foot sometimes, finding traces and ruins, suggesting connections among threads, with a disconcerting sense of the provisional, a sense that there is no particular point to closure, to settlement, yet the connections— almost always unpredictable—convey meaning and possibility. The "travel" is in some sense an experience beyond observing, beyond reading. Here, I am also taken by Pippa Skotnes's weaving—via multiple arts—of questions of archival authority and of modes of circulation of words, utterances, physical traces, and shifting landscapes into a way of understanding and representing the destruction and disappearance of peoples, languages, and things. [29]

* * *

I would like to introduce here another person, another voice, and this is the English lady Eva Hart who died in 1996 at the age of 91. On April 15, 1912, age 7, Eva Hart was a passenger on the new steamship Titanic. She and her parents were emigrating to Canada where her father Benjamin would be taking up work building the city of Winnepeg. Among the last words she heard from her father as he directed Eva and her mother into a life-boat was "Hold Mummy's hand and be a good girl."

Eva Hart did not intend to enter into discussions of the qualities and perils of memory and the experience of trauma. Biographical material on Eva Hart indicates that for some twenty years following the sinking of the Titanic, she was unable to talk about it. She was withdrawn, in depression. She tried various things to break out, to begin to speak about it, and eventually did so. When she began to speak about her

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[27] See Vincent Carretta,"Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa? New Light on an Eighteenth-Century Question of Identity." *Slavery and Abolition* 20, 3 (1999): 96-105. For an early overview of the contentions developing out of Carretta's reconsideration of Equiano's account of his origins and childhood, see Jennifer Howard, "Unraveling the Narrative." *Chronicle of Higher Education*, September 9, 2005. http://chronicle.com/free/v52/i0s/03a01101.htm . Also, see Paul E. Lovejoy's spirited defense of the essential truth of the Vassa/Equiano narrative, "Autobiography and Memory: Gustavus Vassa, alias Olaudah Equiano, the African." http://www.yorku.ca/nhp/seminars/2005_06/Vassa_and_Abolition_-_Slavery_and_Abolition.pdf.

[28] *Austerlitz* (eng. tr., 2001), *The Emigrant*s (eng. tr., 1996), *Rings of Saturn* (eng. tr., 1998), and *Vertigo* (eng. tr. 2000).

[29] See, for example, *Miscast: Negotiating the Presence of the Bushmen* (Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press, 1996).

remembrances of that voyage, of that night, she was nearly sixty years old. At that time, in the early 1960s, she was one of hundreds of survivors who were writing accounts, giving interviews, and so forth (perhaps motivated by the 50th anniversary of the Titanic's demise. In the 1980s, public interest in Titanic memory grew sharply again with fresh and elaborate plans for undersea investigations of the ship. Hart continued to be interviewed, but she also became a most active voice, arguing against disturbing the remains of the ship. Then, after the wreck was first surveyed, she spoke up against any salvage, even against any of its remains being brought to the surface. In 1994, she published an autobiography, *Shadow of the Titanic: A Survivor Story*. In her last years she was reckoned the only survivor old enough at the time to have any recollection of the tragedy.

I have been intrigued by the representations of Eva Hart's survivor stories, of the work of memory, around the time of her death. Eva Hart always had eager audiences. Titanic memory was, from the 1950s and 1960s, becoming a Titanic industry. More recently, we have lived through and experienced one of these episodes of dense memory recovery, that of the release of James Cameron's love story *Titanic*. Eva Hart lived through a number of them, and in part shaped them through her voice, the pathos of her stories, through the location of one young child within the horror of hubris and sensation regarding the building and launching of the ship and its demise.

But if there were eager audiences, there were also skeptics and debunkers. For several decades, few serious Titanic students—and there were and are many careerist students of the Titanic--would believe Eva Hart's claim that the band was playing "Nearer My God to Thee" as the ship went down, nor would they believe that a seven year old in a life boat would have credibly recognized that the ship had broken in two as it went down. Few other survivors saw this, and those with knowledge of ships and catastrophes were certain that the ship went down in one piece. Skeptics mused on Eva Hart's growing recall. As she grew older she remembered more and more detail, well beyond the initial accounts that recalled the simple words and gestures of her Mother and Father as she boarded the life-boat. These memories were joined to Eva Hart's recall of her Mother's premonition that the claim that the ship was unsinkable was "flying in the face of God," and that the ship and all aboard would be doomed. The fears engendered by her Mother's premonition made her sleepless throughout the voyage. She remembered night-mares she had on the ship before it sank. None of this assured anyone that she was a reliable witness to the disaster.

Eva Hart's serial recollections evoked a few issues. There was the suggestion of expanding memory, the implication Eva Hart's recollections had grown with time and therefore were unreliable. This in turn challenged naturalized concepts of authentic memory, that recollections are closest to verisimilitude when in closest temporal proximity to the events observed or recalled. What questions are raised for historians when there is an implication, within the constructs of memory, that remembrances gain perfection in time, that truth is not innocent and primordial but rather constituted in time across layers of experiences, learning, and knowing? What does it mean when we regain memory through engaging our knowledge at one moment with knowledge of

another? What are the constraints, limits, on invention? [30] Of course, Eva Hart was right on one thing, at least, when in 1985 the undersea survey showed that the ship had broken in two when it went down.

In a different vein, but with broad import, Saul Friedländer [31] has written of the "expanding memory of the *Shoah*."

> . . .the Holocaust in Western consciousness resembles that of some sort of lava rising ever closer to the surface and announced by ever stronger rumblings. [32]

Friedländer shifts the historian's, or the citizen's question, from the verisimilitude of a claim to historical truth toward the search for "new concepts that would express, however inadequately, the breakdown of all norms and the dimensions of suffering that traditional historiography cannot easily deal with." [33] Historical anthropology has offered some openings to such new concepts. . .and not only new concepts but also approaches to interpretation and narrativization that respect the pluriversals and indeterminacies in the productions and workings of knowledge.

In late 2008, I sensed, or was drawn toward, a torrent of debates over historical memory and over the challenges to claims of truth with the rise and collapse of so many memoirs of personal experience and trauma. More than twenty years ago, while working on a position paper on "histories and historiographies" I felt a comparable torrent of public debates over the status of historical knowledge and representation. One prime example was the incredible fury developing in and around Julian Cobbing's late 1980s assault on what he called "the myth of the mfecane", a concept that had for more than a generation been a cornerstone of the writing—well, also my teaching--on

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[30] There has hardly been a work more revealing of this layering of images, metaphors, representations, and discourses than Carolyn Hamilton's *Terrific Majesty: The Powers of Shaka Zulu and the Limits of Historical Invention* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1998), esp. 26-32. As well, I recall Garrey Dennie's intriguing study (unpublished) of the autobiographical threads running through Nadine Gordimer's novels through the mid-1980s. Dennie was interested in the representations of "the fates of liberalism in twentieth century South Africa." In his study of Gordimer, Dennie used a "methodology" of comparing all her work as it developed through the decades to her then most recent historical novel—her ninth, *A Sport of Nature*-- which engaged the entire period of her literary production. By constructing this frame of observation of Gordimer on South Africa and on Liberalism, he was able to define in original and powerful ways a series of questions and positions on intellectual production, ideology, perspective, authorship, inscription, retrospection, reading, and text and context, and, relevant here, the ways in which representations of experience and memory at one point mask prior iterations of knowing and may hide or distort the processes through which knowledge, understanding, and intellectual position are constituted.

[31] "History Memory, and the Historian: Facing the Shoah." In Michael S. Roth and Charles G. Salas, eds. *Disturbing Remains: Memory, History, and Crisis in the Twentieth Century*. Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2001, 271-81.

[32] 273-74.

[33] 280.

the early history of southern Africa, a debate sensitively observed and powerfully reconstructed by Carolyn Hamilton. [34]

The torrent or, better, my experience of authenticity debates gone viral, led through a range of small research and writing projects to *The Combing of History* [35]. There, I attempted to rehearse this sense of torrent. I drew attention to an array of experiences of, to quote Milan Kundera, "struggles of memory against forgetting," including the animated public debate over authenticity in a Budweiser beer commercial, the untidy reconstitution of "facts" in the 1980 Michael Cimino film *Heaven's Gate*, the claims to authority over the constitution of truth in acts of documentation and photography, the labors of "forgetting" and "remembering" as presented in Michael Verhoeven's 1989 film *The Nasty Girl*, and the changing ambits of public and private memory in Lawrence, Massachusetts. Then, and today, *memory*, whether dismissed as "fake" or heralded as "therapeutic," whether grist for operations of historical reconstruction or the transcendent displacing the acts and professions of historiography, is vexing.

A Last Bite or Two of the Apple, So to Speak

Here, I admit my own uncertainty in confronting the certainties of the claims to authentic personal truths in the stories of apples over the fence, the certainties of programs of truth finding in the unmasking of fake memory, and the unfinished accounts of the acts, truthful and not, of forgetting, silencing, remembering, representing, narrating, exposing, and unmasking. The precipice, of the first sentence of this essay, has its risks, and it has its opportunities.

With apologies to and acknowledgements of W. G. Sebald, apples over the fence brings back a decade old memory of a screening, in Whitesburg, Kentucky, of Anthony Slone's then recently completed 1997 film "Applewise." [36] The film documents the dying of the apple growing market in Wise County, Virginia, disappearing in the vortex, literally and visibly so, of the expansion of strip-mining in this coal producing Appalachian region. Slone follows the last efforts of the Mullins family to sustain its orchard and trade. At one point in the film, someone takes a bite of a freshly picked apple. Slone's soundtrack captures the extraordinary sound of one bite of the apple. . .the audience that afternoon erupted with "ohs" and "ahs". . .this was a sound rarely experienced but exciting the memory of a fresh apple. . .a sound remembered and not remembered. . .an experience long lost in this world of apples commodified, stored, and distantly transported, yet here recovered in the experience of the screening. There were no such fresh apples available at the screening but, in a way, the audience had tasted the fresh apple and in so experiencing that taste had amplified and even carried the message

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[34] *The Mfecane Aftermath: Reconstructive Debates in Southern African History* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1995).

[35] (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

[36] Headwater Films, Appalshop, Whitesburg, KY.

of loss beyond the capacity of the filmmaker to produce an eloquent text that grieved the passing of the local apple market. A filmmaker and a film and an audience were transformed into a visceral co-production of recovery of experience. The memory of the fresh apple was beyond historical verification.

In Mark Behr's *The Smell of Apples* [37], young Marnus recalls a journey with his father into the countryside of the Cape.

> It was just before sunset on our way back from Uncle Samuel's farm in Grabouw and the whole back seat of the car was stacked up with apples. The apples lay on a bed of wood shavings so that they wouldn't get bruised. When Dad and I got out of the car to look at the sunset, the whole sky was turning dark red. The bay was as flat as a mirror, with Table Mountain pitch-black above the city lights in the distance. We stood up there, looking down on it, and Dad said there's nothing more beautiful in the world than what we were seeing in front of us. He said *nothing* and *no one* [italics in the text] could ever take it from us. . . .While Dad and I stood up there, watching the red sky. . .(Dad said) 'And this country was empty before our people arrived. *Everything, everything* you see, *we* built up from nothing. This is our place, given to us by God and we will look after it. Whatever the cost.'
>
> When we got back into the car, you could smell the apples everywhere. I turned round to look at the crates on the back seat, but it was already too dark to see them. 'Dad, do you smell the apples?' I asked in the dark. 'Ja, Marnus,' Dad answered as turned the Volvo back on to the road. 'Even the apples we brought to this land.' (121-24)

The Smell of Apples was Behr's first published novel [38]. Framed around memories of childhood, and the growth of the child into a man in the service of oppression, *Smell of*

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[37] (New York: St. Martins, 1995); first published in Afrikaans in 1993 as *Die Reuk van Appels.* Cape Town: Queillerie.

[38] For a good reading of Behr, see Ruth Barnard, "The Smell of Apples, Moby-Dick, and Apartheid Ideology." *MFS Modern Fiction Studies* 46, 1, (Spring 2000), 207-226. See also, critical work on the immediate moment and reception of Behr's confession: Nic Borain, "The Smell of Rotten Apples." *The Weekly Mail and Guardian*, July 12, 1996. Also, see Leigh A. Payne, *Unsettling Accounts: Neither Truth Nor Reconciliation in Confessions of State Violence* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 41-74, in which Payne discusses explicitly the reception and implications of Behr's confession, just a few weeks into the work of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission; and Sarah Nuttall, "Telling 'free' stories? Memory and democracy in South African autobiography since 1994." In Sarah Nuttall and Carli Coetzee, eds. *Negotiating the past: The making of memory in South Africa* (New York: Oxford, 1998), 75-88, esp. 86-87. Additionally, see Sarah Nuttall and Cheryl-Ann Michael, "Autobiographical Acts." In Sarah Nuttall and Cheryl-Ann Michael, eds. *Senses of Culture: South African Culture Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 298-317, in which Behr's "confession and the performance of self-purge" are discussed alongside other post-apartheid South African memoirs and public confessions. While they unfold a rich discussion of autobiography as history and therapy, from books to talk-shows, they do not identify a wave of truth-policing such as has been visited on memoirs in the European and American contexts. For a reading of the "Faultlines" project, see Stephani

Apples offered dense views of the banalities of apartheid, of the lies that the beneficiaries of apartheid learned to tell about themselves, to reproduce, and to live with. The novel rotated around such crevasses as this one in which a boy's desire for confirmation of the quality of apples is overwritten by the father's commensurate need to sustain his people's claims to the privileges and powers of white domination.

As the conference on "The Future of the Past: The Production of History in a Changing South Africa" opened at the University of Western Cape in South Africa in July 1996, a furious debate was underway regarding the revelation that Behr, the Afrikaans writer, recognized as an important anti-apartheid voice, and brilliant young and award winning novelist, had served the apartheid regime as an intelligence agent—while an activist university student--and had then joined the ANC underground as, in the end, a double-agent. Behr used the podium as keynote-speaker at a truth and reconciliation exhibition and conference—"Faultlines"-- at the Castle in Cape Town immediately preceding "Future of the Past" to unfold his own complicity, to produce his own revelation, to manufacture his own truth and reconciliation stage. [39] Behr's moment at the podium was intended to mark the moving and self-critical appraisals of apartheid by apartheid's beneficiaries just as the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission had begun. But it was Behr's unexpected revelations about himself, and the public's awkward receptions of them, that cast a new and different aura around this new project of national truth-finding and the intellectual's role in it. And this now infinitely more complex situation in which it was instantly difficult to distinguish heroes and villains in the search for history, truth, and reconciliation, was the unexpected stage-setter for the conference on "The Future of the Past", opening the next day, of which I was keynote speaker (!). I recall my own unsettlement at my entirely unanticipated baptism into the immediate aftermath of the Behr revelations at a time in my own work in 1996 when I was working on "the constitution of truth" in the Robert Ouko murder aftermath in Kenya. I recall ruminating that whereas organizers of conferences had unknowingly gone too far into *the question of truth* by presenting Behr as their Cape Town keynoter; whereas, with much of the same audience present, the organizers of the next affair had found someone much too far from that same

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Marlin-Curiel, "Truth and Consequences: Art in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission," in *Text and Image: Art and the Performance of Memory*," ed. Richard Candida Smiths (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 2006), 37-62.

[39] One sign of the historical significance of this conference is that it appears in the southern African *Heilbrun timeline* of the Metropolitan Museum of Art: **"**•1996 Cape Town Castle, the former intelligence headquarters of the South African Defence Force, hosts the exhibition *Faultlines: Enquiries into Truth and Reconciliation*, which shows works created by artists with materials from the Mayibuye Archive, a collection of photographs, videos, and other documents gathered by friends and members of the African National Congress while in exile." http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/ht/11/sfs/ht11sfs.htm

question. [40] I gave my opening remarks on the production of history but could not intervene in the ways that this audience had viscerally experienced that apple.

Thirteen years later I search for a place to stand, not only between two disciplines but also between two torrents: to the one side, a rush of broken stories and fake memories, to the other side, the labors of finders of fact and arbiters of truth. A precipice, yes perhaps. . .but it is also a place to stand that offers views and possibilities not available on solid ground. And yet again it is perhaps not the solidity of that precipice but rather—to cite Italo Calvino [41]--the lightness of stance that may yield fresh and transformative possibilities in the business of finding, knowing and understanding. And, to follow W. G. Sebald, that business of knowing and understanding, is perhaps not so much a question of stance as one of motion, motion through time and space, and across diverse contexts of production of meaning, and of apples.

[40] For articles discussing the work and goals of the conference, as well as then current topics of historical debate among publics and scholars see *South African Historical Journal* 35, 1 (1996).

[41] *Six Memos for the New Millennium*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. 1988. See David William Cohen, "Unsettled stories and inadequate metaphors: The movement to historical anthropology," in Willford and Tagliacozzo, eds. *Op. cit.*