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The Kaiser's Concubines: Re-Membering African Women in Eugenics and Genocide[1]

This paper investigates the memory of colonial mass violence and atrocities as articulated, preserved and transmitted through the performance *Exhibit B* by Brett Bailey. Particular focus is placed on the collusion of racism and colonial sciences towards African women's bodies. It traces the systematic use of sexual violence and the institutionalisation of rape during and in the aftermath of the 1904 to 1908 German aggression in present day Namibia. This sexual aggression on prisoners of war and colonial subjects in and outside of concentration camps found expression and was echoed in racist sciences such as eugenics and racial hygiene. People like Eugen Fischer gained recognition and fame for notorious studies on 'racial hygiene', through forced sterilisation experiments on racially mixed people in Namibia and Germany, the majority of whom were born as a result of these institutional rapes. *Exhibit B* is a performance exhibition that deploys performance to animate genocide memory and photographs from the colonial ethnographic archive. I use *Exhibit B* as a case study to investigate how performance enacts this memory to transmit knowledge about the past in response to the 'social amnesia' accompanying unacknowledged genocides. I examine the deployment of performance in animating archival texts to create ephemeral images. In doing so, I explore how the images tell (hi)stories through performance as well as the contemporary political usage and reception of images. I make the case that performance envelops time and creates an alternate historiographic repository for gendered genocide memory. I propose that performance preserves time and history. Through its performativity, performance serves as an event preservative and embalms memory.

1 Introduction

This paper investigates the memory of colonial mass violence against African women as articulated through performance in Brett Bailey's *Exhibit B*. It pays particular attention to the collusion of racism and colonial sciences towards African women's bodies. It traces the systematic use of sexual violence and the institutionalisation of rape during and in the aftermath of the 1904 to 1908 German aggression in present day Namibia. I suggest that this sexual aggression on prisoners of war and colonial subjects in concentration camps was part of and was condoned by the colonial expansionist policies of Kaiser Wilhelm. The sexual aggression and murders found expression and were echoed in racist 19th century sciences like eugenics and racial hygiene.

Exhibit B has elicited multiple and mixed feelings from a cross section of audi-

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ences. It draws praise and condemnation in equal measure wherever it is shown – from Grahamstown, South Africa, to the Edinburgh Arts Festival, United Kingdom, to France. It was dubbed 'Edinburgh's most controversial show' when it played at the Edinburgh Festival in 2014 (O'Mahony 2014). Protests and demonstrations ensued at the Barbican Theatre in London when the performance was scheduled to open. An estimated 200 people gathered in protest and blocked the entrance of the Barbican theatre, forcing the theatre management to cancel the opening (Muir 2014).

When the show returned to Paris, the same scenes were repeated. The opening night at the Théatre Gérard-Philipe at Saint Denis, and the Centquatre Cultural Centre in Northern Paris had to be cancelled. The show's run could only proceed under heavy police watch. It was a stand-off pitting incensed protestors on one hand and advocates for the show on the other, watched by the police (Todd / Boitiaux 2014). There was and still is a sustained media campaign at many venues across the world to stop the show considered by some as nothing more than a 'human zoo' (*ibid*.). Passionate campaigners – some of which may not even have seen the show – felt and feel that it should be cancelled or stopped. At the time when the protests erupted at the Barbican, 22,500 signatures had been appended to an online petition to stop the performance (Muir 2014). These campaigners argued that the performance is a contemporary revival of racism under the guise of art. For the sake of space, I shall not dwell on the audiences' response to the performance, like the protest action.

Rather, I shall focus on the content of the exhibition, particularly on the sections that evoke the memory and document the systematic rape, sexual slavery, humiliation and sexualised medical experiments conducted in colonial Namibia. I use *Exhibit B* as a case study to investigate how performance enacts memory in response to the 'social amnesia' accompanying colonial genocides (Alayarian 2008: 4). I examine the use of performance in animating archival texts to create ephemeral contemporary images. In doing so, I explore how *Exhibit B* stages (hi)stories through performance as well as the contemporary political usage and reception of images. Throughout this, I am mindful of the role of affect in memory meaning-making. I pay attention to how women's experience of colonial exploitation is remembered, re-membered, performed and transmitted in what I suggest is an unacknowledged genocide in Namibia.

Exhibit B illustrates a contemporary incident where the affective reception of art and history led to violent and passionate outbursts of emotion. Through *Exhibit B*, we can witness and contemplate how visuality, community and affect are interdependent in represented or imagined history. *Exhibit B* is an example of the passionate contemporary struggle over the appropriation of colonial ethnographic photographs and memory. It also demonstrates the difficulty of finding and generating consensus to reading art that appropriates and inverts the gaze on historical colonial photographs and imagery. Performances like *Exhibit B* animate the material archival into a public yet ephemeral and embodied performance repertoire that facilitates the communication and endurance of knowledge.

I draw on Michel Foucault and Diana Taylor's work to make the case that *Exhibit B* stands as the public yet ephemeral and embodied commemoration of colonial genocide (Foucault 1977; Taylor 2003). Foucault's panopticon concept is especially useful to my analysis as it allows me to think through the efficacy of the framing device of the ethnographic show as the performance structure employed in *Exhibit B* (Foucault 1977: 195). In *Exhibit B*, performance envelops time and creates an alternate repository for genocide memory. I propose that through its performativity, *Exhibit B* serves as an event preservative and embalms genocide memory. It preserves and transmits the memory and knowledge of the Namibian genocide across space and time. *Exhibit B* animates the colonial archive through embodied performance to facilitate the communication and endurance of knowledge, through what Taylor terms the 'repertoire' (Taylor 2003: 1). In Taylor's view, writing anchors the archive. In contrast, in the repertoire, performance constitutes an alternate episteme, the system of knowledge production and preservation of which is fundamentally distinct from the archive (*ibid*.: 20). In turning colonial archival photographs into performance, *Exhibit B* constitutes an alternate episteme facilitating remembering of the past through embodied recreation with contemporary bodies.

2 Colonial Remains in European Museums

Exhibit B was commissioned and inspired by what Brett Bailey considers to be the remnants of colonialism in contemporary migration, race and material relations. This is most evident in how material and immaterial goods and bodies that were created and forcibly acquired outside of Europe and imported in the 19th and early

20th centuries continue to define the collections of ethnological museums found across the majority of European cities today. These collections were and are often exhibited alongside geographic regions and/or thematic links, supposedly to offer insights into the diversity of non-European cultures. The discourse of imperial conquest and colonialism that facilitated these acquisitions is essentially over. Nevertheless the collections remain, along with the knowledge systems and stereotypes that anchored it. Possessing and arranging these collections in the present presents material and ideological challenges for new cosmopolitan narratives that are used to define this age. Exhibitions and performances dealing with colonial era artefacts like *Exhibit B* now have to negotiate cultural and ethical contestations of ownership and representation and the right to represent, which arise out of the uneven power interactions fostered in the colonial order.

A change in consciousness as well as sustained pressure has led to various degrees of efforts to rearrange some of these collections and/or the styles of display. There seem to be concerted efforts in some quarters to sever any connections with now-discredited scientific disciplines that supported the colonial project (Simpson 2012). There is evidence of postcolonial recognition and discomfort with patterns of perception, repertoires of feelings and habits of thinking and knowing that arguably shored up European superiority in meaning-making. This has led to a need for curators and directors to revise exhibiting techniques, floor plans, informational labels and other meaning-making devices that once served as evidence to sustain since discredited scientific narratives of racial order, evolution and the civilising mission.

In most former colonial nations, the advent of political independence led to a reinterpretation of museum spaces to provide visual impressions and expressions of new postcolonial ideologies. In some cases, museums have gone as far as removing any references to 'ethnology' in their names. One such case is the *Völkerkundemuseum* (Ethnology Museum) in Vienna, whose name was changed to *Weltmuseum* (World Museum) (http://www.weltmuseumwien.at/en/). *Exhibit B* draws on archival material that is often catalogued in museum collections. Through this analysis, we can interrogate the contribution of a performance to the debate about colonial remains in the archive. I highlight how the performance engages with memory and the remains of African women's bodies in the archive. These human remains are sometimes classified as 'specimens' or 'artefacts'. Their

contested and unsettling placement echoes the remnants of brutality of colonial genocides and their present-day consequences.

3 *Exhibit B* – Synopsis

The performance series opened with *Exhibit A*, which premiered at the Ethnology Museum in Vienna, Austria, in 2010 and travelled to Germany thereafter. In 2012, Brett Bailey created a sequel, *Exhibit B*, which added *tableau vivant* installations pertaining to Belgian colonialism, which I saw in Grahamstown, South Africa. It has toured most of the major global festivals since then. *Exhibit B* is a performance exhibition that animates memory and photographs from the colonial archive. It animates images that capture, document and in some instances celebrate the atrocities committed by 19th century colonial forces. The images were drawn from German South West Africa as well as from the Belgian and French Congo. Some installations stage the plight of African immigrants living in – and during their deportation from – Europe. It animates the violent and often fatal nature of these deportations, which make them look like extraditions. The show also stages the cold horror of Apartheid.

Exhibit B starts as soon as the audience queues up to enter the exhibition. Once invited inside, audiences are led into a room with rows of chairs. They are handed a numbered card and asked to wait in absolute silence to enter the exhibition when their number is called. This wait, lasting between ten and fifteen minutes, serves as audience preparation and also staggers the flow of people as they move through the performance exhibition. Spectators enter the site-specific location one at a time and travel through the rooms of the exhibition.

The work is performed by a core team of four Namibian musicians. This team is complimented by fourteen African immigrants or asylum seekers that Brett Bailey selects from the host city. *Exhibit B* comprises of twelve silent tableaux arranged along a path. They recall distinct historical epochs using conventions of museum display. The performance comprises of a series of glass installations housed in individual rooms. It features glass cabinets in which anatomical 'specimens' like skulls, bones or skeletons characteristic of the colonial ethnographic museum are displayed. *Exhibit B* replicates and parodies the ethnographic spectacles of the 19th and 20th century to interrogate European colonial massacres, racism and racial science, social Darwinism, genocide as well as increasing modern-day xenopho-

bia. The exhibits replicate colonial European reconstructions of indigenous African people in 'their natural habitats'. Other installations cite art museum formats that isolate and elevate objects through lighting, frames and pedestals.

The installations cover a wide range of colonial brutal excesses across Africa. For instance, one station evokes the memory of the brutal rubber collection system King Leopold implemented in the Congo. This system involved the enslavement and chopping off of hands of all persons who failed to meet set delivery targets, as well as the wanton shooting of people to keep the state-turned-private rubber plantation running (Hochschild 1998: 165). In *Exhibit B*, a performer in a colonial police uniform and white face sits with a basket full of latex hand casts (fig. 1). The installation forms a metaphorical, ironic and disturbing harvest of rubber hands. What is particularly effective here is that historic tableaux are interspersed with present-day African asylum seekers labelled as 'found objects'.

Fig. 1: King Leopold's Congo Harvest. Photo by Valeria Zalaquett ©

Some installations of the performance reference post-colonial incidents of racism by some European nations and nationals towards asylum seekers and immigrants living in and deported from Europe. *Exhibit B* uses performers whose arms and legs are circled by measuring tapes and whose bodies are accompanied by biometric data charts. One station has a bound-up performer (fig. 2). This evokes scenes of often violent deportation of asylum seekers. These deportations have resulted in deaths by suffocation in Germany, Austria, Belgium, Hungary, France,

the United Kingdom and Switzerland (Fekete 2003; Webber 1996). This juxtaposing provides audiences with an opportunity to explore links and continuities between historical narratives of racist subjugation and contemporary experiences. This highlights the contemporary violence and the tendencies that lead to the 'othering' and pathologising of non-European bodies. These props link the anthropometric techniques of 19th century racial science with contemporary regimes of migration control.

Fig. 2: Forced deportation of asylum seekers. Photo by Valeria Zalaquett ©

4 Remembering and Re-membering African women in eugenics and genocide

The particular place and experience of women in the memory constructions of colonial encounters forms a running theme in *Exhibit B*. I shall now turn to four of the tableaux to unpack how *Exhibit B* enacts memory in response to postcolonial 'social amnesia' of colonial brutalities (Alayarian 2008: 4). The analysis uses the installations to examine how the performance animates colonial genocides and the treatment and experiences of African women in particular. Through this, I bring to the fore how *Exhibit B* as a performance preserves and transmits knowledge about this past in ways that allow contemporary understanding and usage.

The first tableaux vivant on African women evokes the memory of Saartje Bartmann infamously called the Hottentot Venus. Saartje Bartmann's exploitation,

humiliation and rape have become iconic for black diasporic communities as an embodiment of European race relations at human zoos. On the back of the abolishment of the slave trade and at the height of colonialism, Saartje Bartmann was displayed in London and then Paris in 1810 (Moudileno 2009). Due to her presumed peculiar anatomy, she was put on display as a 'freak' embodiment of African sexual excess and racial inferiority. The obsession with her anatomy continued past her mortal life. Upon her death on December 29, 1815, French scientist Georges Cuvier conducted a post-mortem. Cuvier produced a full body plaster cast of Saartje Bartmann. He went on to remove her brain and genitalia. These he preserved and put on display at his own private *Musée d'Histoire Naturelle* (Natural History Museum), and later at the *Musée de l'Homme* (Museum of Man) (Moudileno 2009: 202). These body parts were to remain on public display until 1974, where upon they were put in storage. The call for her repatriation was formally set in motion by South African President Nelson Mandela in 1995. It took 7 years for the motion to be honoured. In 2002, the French government returned her remains and cast for interment (*ibid*.: 202).

The second tableaux vivant that focuses on African women in *Exhibit B* draws on the events now commonly referred to as the 1904–1908 Herero-Nama Namibian genocide. While the genocide as a whole has received some attention in scholarship, the gendered experiences of women before, during and after the genocide have not. *Exhibit B* breaks this silence by foregrounding the systematic rape of Africans by European settlers and forces in colonial Namibia. In 1903, after two decades of German colonisation of Namibia, 712 European women lived among 3,970 European men (Madley 2004). Despite the reports of widespread rape of indigenous women by the settler forces, prior to 1904, not a single case was heard by the German courts. The rape of local women was so widespread that the German colonial settlers had coined special terms for the practice, like *Verkafferung*, or 'going native', and *Schmutzwirtschaft*, meaning 'dirty trade' (Rohrbach 1907).

1904 is important in the history that this tableau evokes for two reasons. Firstly, it marks the year that the Herero revolted against German colonial rule. For the memory of African women at the coalface of colonialism, it marks the year when the attempted rape and murder of Louisa Kamana became the first case to be heard by a German court. Louisa and her husband, the son of Chief Zacharias, gave a ride to a German national, identified in archival records only as Dietrich

(Drechsler 1980). During the night, Dietrich 'made sexual advances' which Louisa refused, so he shot and killed her (Administrator's Office 1918). The Herero people were incensed by this abuse of hospitality and the acquittal of Dietrich by a German colonial court. The case was successfully appealed and Dietrich was sentenced to three years in prison (*ibid*.). The offense and the sentence outraged the Herero. They were incensed that the dignity and life of even the chief's daughter-in-law meant so little before German law (Madley 2004).

In an effort to crush the Herero uprising, the German army established concentration camps for African people in 1905. *Exhibit B* uses an installation that recreates a German military officer's living quarters to foreground the experiences of African women who experienced the war and the concentration camps of the 1904–1908 war. An assortment of objects hangs on the walls. They range from a cross, hunting trophies to guns and framed images of hangings. In some of the photos, girls and women were forced to pose nude, or to expose their bodies as German officers pose around them, laughing and smiling. Some of these nude images were made into postcards, souvenirs and other memorabilia sent back to Germany by the soldiers.

In the *Exhibit B* installation, a woman sits stiffly upright on the bed (fig. 3). The woman is shackled by her neck, hands and feet to the bed. She is naked from the waist up and sits with her back to the audience. In front of her is a mirror through which she stares. She makes eye contact with every audience member as they come into the room. Audience members who look at her and look into the mirror lock eyes with her and see their images reflected back.

Through this installation, the performance visualises the stories and experiences of the many unnamed women who endured sexual slavery as 'comfort women' during the war. The immediacy of the installation demands live participation and a visceral response from audiences. The performer uses her body, rather than words, to convey the acute sensitivity of the moment. I shall cite Brett Bailey's exposition of this installation and the backstory he created for the performer sitting on the bed at length before moving on to the next installation.

> I tell the woman: You were in your village one night and your husband was out fighting, your father was out fighting. You've got two children. Early in the morning before the sun rises, there's a fire. You hear gunshots, people are screaming. You run from the house, you grab the children, one child falls and you don't see that child again. You hide in a bush and see a rape going on. In the morning they find you. Your house is on fire and your mother was in that house. You walk for days and

> you're in the concentration camp now, you've been here for a long time. It's freezing, your child is coughing all the time. There are children dying from cholera all around you and a soldier comes around and he tells you to go with him. He takes you and you know you're going to be raped by him afterward and you'll submit because it means he'll give you some food for your child. So you're sitting on the bed waiting for all of this to happen. When you see an audience member enter the room in the mirror, it's the German soldier. (Krueger 2013: 6)

Fig. 3: Herero 'comfort women'. Photo by Valeria Zalaquett ©

5 Understanding the performance frame

Exhibit B can be understood as drawing on the performance forms of the 'human zoos' that were popular with audiences in the Global north as family entertainment (Trupp 2011: 139). The 'human zoo' as performance exhibits 'otherness' by emphasising physical and cultural differences. This forces contemporary audiences to engage with the politics of representation. The concept of the human zoo can be understood as "to place a person [...], with the intention that they should be seen, in a specific reconstructed space, not because of what they 'do' (as an artisan, for example), but because of what they 'are' (seen through the prism of a real or imagined difference)" (Blanchard et al. 2008: 23). I propose to extend Foucault's (1977) panopticon concept to read the human zoo as performance. Foucault defines the concept of panopticon as a scopic technology and a regime of power/knowledge in which an all-seeing viewer and a defencelessly exposed and 'blind' target meet each other in a context guaranteeing maximum transparency of

the target to the spectator and inaccessibility and immobilisation for the spectator (Foucault 1977: 195).

The installations are framed in such a way that audiences have to negotiate performers returning the spectator's gaze directly or through the mirror. This dramaturgical choice makes it impossible for *Exhibit B* to be viewed or photographed without engagement. This can be considered as the device that gives it its subversive and affective power. The performance subverts the unidirectional gaze of the powerful who can watch while remaining unseen by their charges. Through the liveness of performance, *Exhibit B* works as subversive critique in inverting the assumptions that underpinned the colonial misadventure. The result is a disconcerting transformation of the spectator into spectacle; the viewer is suddenly under scrutiny. The result detonates the status quo. This is reinforced by the silence that is asked of the audience and the artistic choice of stopping the performers from speaking to or with the spectators, or to engage with them in any way save for the gaze. The performance's audiences are forced to reflect on their placement as consumers of the performance and in relation to the historical systems being staged.

6 The Aestheticization of Pain

The third tableau on African women also references the concentration camps where survivors of the colonial war in Namibia were held. It is set to the ambience of a melodic 19th century romantic *lied*. A large, regal woman in Herero traditional dress complete with the distinctive knotted cow horn kerchief around her head sits with her knees spread apart (fig. 4). She faces the audiences frontally and from an elevated pedestal where she returns the audiences' gaze. She is holding a shard of glass in her right hand and a human skull in her left hand. She sits on a pedestal entirely covered with small glittering glass shards. On the wall below her seat is a large cross. In front of her, to her left and right are two high wooden posts. Strands of barbed wire are strung between them. A sign written in German is attached to the barbed wire and warns against electrocution. Torn shreds of clothing on the barbed wire suggest that someone tried to escape and tore their clothes in the attempt. On top of the two poles are masks of human skulls. To the left and right of the pedestal are two human skulls, each in a small glass case. The plaque on the installation informs audiences that this recreates the

concentration camps on Shark Island where Herero and Nama survivors of the genocide were imprisoned. Women detainees were forced to boil and scrape skin off the severed heads of their families and community. Some survivors were deported to German prisoner-of-war camps in Southwest Africa, German Togo, and Cameroon (Steinmetz / Hell 2006: 157).

Fig. 4: Herero Concentration Camps. Photo by Valeria Zalaquett ©

According to the colony's acting governor, these measures were meant to ensure that the people endure a "period of suffering" (*Leidenszeit*) in the concentration camps (*ibid*.: 160). This governor-general was Heinrich Ernst Göring, the father of Hermann Göring, who became a leading Nazi and Adolf Hitler's appointed second in command. Executions and mortality rates were high and it was from here that people were turned into research and collectors' 'specimen' that were later deployed as the basis of Nazi anthropology (Gewald 1999: 141–230). The skulls were then sent back to German museums, private collectors and university research centres to furnish evidence for physical anthropologists' racial theories (*ibid*.: 141–191).

This installation can be read as a condensation of the main ingredients of colonial violence. The cross on the wall in the foreground signals the Christian missionary activities that often preceded and accompanied traders, settlers and military troops. German troops under General Lothar von Trotha's (3 July 1848–31 March 1920) command poisoned water wells and drove the people into the Omaheke desert, where most died of thirst as they fled to Botswana. There is no consensus among historians about the exact figures of the dead. Historians estimate that only about 16,000 Hereros out of a population of between 60,000 and 80,000, and around 10,000 Nama from an estimated population of 20,000 survived (Gewald 1999: 141–191). The melodic music added to the woman's stoic posture contrasting with the glittering shards evokes a profoundly moving image of "beautiful pain" (Mahali 2013: 4). The glittering shards covering the floor can be read as a reference to South African diamond mines: more specifically, the collision of capitalism and colonialism. The glass shards allude to the diamond mining company that suggested and used colonial prisoners as slaves (see German Federal Archives, Berlin, Colonial Office documents, vol. 2118, 154v, July 3, 1905, cited in Steinmetz / Hell 2006: 160).

Fig. 5: Herero Concentration Camps Skulls. Photo by Valeria Zalaquett ©

The skulls perched on top of the camp fence (fig. 5) can also be read as a reference to Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (Conrad 1988). *Heart of Darkness* is

set in an unnamed African colony, where the colonial administration uses barbaric terror to maintain power. Compelling arguments have been forwarded to make the case that this unnamed place is the Belgian Congo, under the colonial reign of King Leopold II of Belgium from 1885–1908 (Ward 2005: 434).

In *Exhibit B*, this reference works at multiple levels. At one level, it embeds the German concentration camps into a larger history of colonial aggression. This serves to highlight the commonality and banality of colonial brutality. On another level, the skulls introduce an argument about the continuities of racial violence connecting colonialism and Fascism to present-day biometrics regimes in migration (Webber 1996: 1). Masks from non-European cultures and their associated meanings and mythologies have held and continue to hold a pride of place, bordering on fetishism, in colonial and imperial ethnography collections held in Western archives and associated scholarship (Campbell 1991; Jopling 1971; Sannes 1970).

In *Exhibit B*, the masks call into question the right of collectors, museums and other research institutions to collect, preserve, study and to regard human remains as well as cultural products as property. This disruption is extended to the knowledge systems and the racial bias of such ways of conceiving the world that normalise such excesses. *Exhibit B* can be considered as belonging to a new trend in museum and archaeology practice that has led to renewed efforts in curating and managing collections of materials looted during and because of colonialism (Jolly 2011). These considerations are aimed to retrospectively redress the injustices of their acquisition. In this new paradigm, skulls, which were once held as 'objects' and 'specimens' in anatomical archives, have since been reclassified as 'human remains' or as 'bodies'. This has often been accompanied by efforts to re-contextualise the exhibits and in some cases to repatriate these bodies into the custody of their communities and areas of origin (Bernick 2014). In Namibia, such skulls have become powerful actors in international relations and domestic affairs around the memory of 1904–1908 colonial genocide. Skulls once held as 'objects' in anatomical archives have not only been reclassified as 'human remains' or as parts of 'bodies' traveling in coffins, but they have also become powerful actors in international relations and domestic affairs around the memory of unacknowledged genocide. The skulls are considered not only as mortal remains,

but the material evidence of genocide in the ongoing battle for acknowledgment, demand for an apology and calls for restitution.

7 'The Cabinet of Eugen Fischer'

The final station in *Exhibit B* animates the memory of the 1904–1908 Namibian genocide by focusing on mourning for the dead and desecrated. Four Namibian singers deliver a moving rendition of songs of lamentation (fig. 6). The musical score was composed and arranged by Namibian composer Marcellinus Swartbooi. The score was commissioned to commemorate the genocide. The singers' heads, painted in glossy black, are visible above white pedestals covering their bodies, giving the impression of live museum displays. Staging the 'human zoo' and 'black face' as performance in this day and age is a politically provocative act. Such a staging choice forces audiences to engage with the memory of the racial stereotypes and racial sciences that naturalised this form of representation as well as its present-day manifestations. Mounted on the wall behind and over these disembodied singing heads are enlarged photographs of the severed heads of Herero and Nama victims.

Fig. 6: Human remains in colonial collections. Photo by Valeria Zalaquett ©

This final installation was titled 'The Cabinet of Eugen Fischer' and provided details about the career of this prominent physical anthropologist. Eugen Fischer (1874–1967) was professor of medicine, anthropology and eugenics (Schmuhl 2008). He conducted notorious studies of racially mixed people in Namibia and Germany and became a leading racial scientist under the Nazis. Fischer was director of the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute of Anthropology, Human Heredity and Eugen-

ics between 1927 and 1942. He was eventually appointed rector of the Frederick William University of Berlin by Adolf Hitler in 1933 (*ibid*.). Eugen Fischer's Institute in Berlin taught eugenics and trained people like Otmar Freiherr von Verschuer and Josef Mengele, nicknamed the 'Angel of Death', who performed human experiments at Auschwitz (*ibid*.). Eugen Fischer authored a 1913 study of *Mischling*- (racially mixed) children of European men and Hottentot African women in German South West Africa. Fischer opposed 'racial mixing', arguing that 'Negro blood' was of 'lesser value' and that mixing it with 'white blood' would bring about the demise of European culture. He also developed the 'Fischer-Saller scale', which determined racial origins of people. Through his work, Fischer championed the forced sterilisation of persons of mixed race (*ibid*.). The works of Fischer and like-minded scientists provided the 'scientific' basis of and for Nazi policies. Among other notorieties, Eugen Fischer championed the Nuremberg Race Laws of 1935 on which the South African Apartheid laws were later modelled. *Exhibit B* highlights the lasting legacy of this 'pseudo-science' today.

Fischer's work was celebrated by the Nazi regime. However, some of his contemporaries, like anatomist Franz Weidenreich (1946) and geneticist Richard Goldschmidt (1942), objected to his methods so much so that they publicly brandished Fisher as a war criminal. After World War 2, despite these controversies, Fischer remained affiliated with many leading German universities. He was Emeritus Professor at Freiburg University until his death in 1967 (Schmuhl 2008). Currently, the University of Freiburg holds up to 1,500 human remains in its collections from this era. By naming this station after Fischer, Brett Bailey emphasised the ideological continuities between colonial racial science, the Nazi racial state and post-war German democracy, where Fischer was an honorary member of the post-war German Anthropological Association. The 'Cabinet of Eugen Fischer'-tableau in *Exhibit B* reclaims the murdered and desecrated from the visual archive of racial science and endows them with a kind of speech and visibility.

This station is distinct from all others in that the performers no longer face the audience or seek eye contact. They are positioned in profile and their eyes look towards the right, which in western visual traditions signifies the future. The exertion and discomfort of the singers, who crouch in their tight boxes kinaesthetically, affect audience members who engage this station for a sustained period of time. The singers sweat profusely due to the strain of working under these confin-

ing conditions. Beads of perspiration formed and streaked their 'black face' glossy make up. Their sweat and exertion of the effort can be read to symbolise how the pain of remembering has been left on the shoulders of the descendants of this unacknowledged genocide.

8 Bone(s) of contention

The bones or human remains that feature prominently in *Exhibit B* have become a hotly contested issue in the lobbying and negotiations for the German government to formally recognise and apologise for the actions of Kaiser Wilhelm's troops during the 1904–1908 war in Namibia as acts of genocide. This campaign has been led by descendants of the victims of the unacknowledged genocide. In 2008, the Namibian government paid heed to this lobbying and officially requested the return of human remains related to the colonial war against the Herero, Nama and Damara people. In response to this formal request, some German Institutions began to initiate processes to hand over and repatriate Namibian human remains in their possession. Between 2011 and 2014, forty skulls and body parts from Namibia that were held in the collections of the Charité Hospital in Berlin were returned. Scientific tests are still ongoing for a further fifteen skulls at the Charité, suspected to be from Namibia as well. In the same period, the University of Freiburg returned fourteen skulls from its anthropological collection. The University of Greifswald confirmed the possession of three skulls from Namibia (Kössler 2015: 281).

At the 2011 maiden return ceremony, the Namibian government flew in a sizable delegation of high ranking officials, Namibian chiefs and spiritual experts and members of three activist committees (fig. 7). This status gesture was, however, not reciprocated and only one junior representative of the German government spoke. The activist committees represented included the *Ovaherero*/*Ovambanderu* Council for the Dialogue on the 1904 Genocide, the *Ovaherero* Genocide Committee and the Nama Technical Committee (Biwa 2012). The chairman of the Executive Board of the Charité, who spoke on the occasion, apologised for the "complicity of German science in the colonial enterprise and in colonial violence" (*ibid*.: 269). The German minister on the other hand avoided the terms *genocide*, *apology*, *restitution*, or *reparations*. When some audience members shouted "apo-

logy now" and "reparations now", the minister left the ceremony, to the great consternation of the assembled Namibian delegation (*ibid.*).

Fig. 7: Namibian delegation at the first human remains hand-over ceremony at the Charité. Photo by Godwin Kornes ©

The exact number of Namibian skulls in German archives is not known and might never be determined. In the more than one hundred years that have passed since the genocide, some of the documentation and the human remains themselves have been destroyed in Namibia and in Germany. In 1915, some archival records were destroyed by German officers in the face of the South African troops' onslaught. In the course of the Second World War, Allied bombs laid to waste records and possibly collections with human remains as well (Adhikari 2008: 310). What has been established is that Goethe University in Frankfurt am Main holds 12,000 skeletons in its anthropological collection. In the city of Dresden, the *Völkerkundemuseum (Ethnic Museum)* holds 6,500 'objects' (Kössler 2015: 281). In the early 2000s, the Alexander Ecker Collection stationed at Freiburg University was said to be 'out of order and barely documented'. It contained skulls with inscriptions that read "Neger" and "Hottentotte". The human remains in this collection are said to have been 'kept for years, quite unattended, in the basement of the university hospital' (Wegmann 2013: 401–402, cited by Kössler 2015: 281).

Institutions that hold human remains and other cultural 'artefacts' claim that they only have documents that record when and where they acquired their collections,

but not how they were originally obtained (*ibid*.). The Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation, which manages Berlin's state-owned and run museums, recently announced that it holds in custody human remains from Germany's former colonies (Deutsche Welle 2016; Tharoor 2016). The human remains were obtained for 'scientific' experiments during colonialism. The foundation has more than 1000 skulls from areas that form present-day Rwanda. There are 60 skulls from present-day Tanzania (Deutsche Welle 2016; Tharoor 2016). These skulls originate from an area that was then administered as the German East Africa colony from 1885 until 1918. These human remains are a part of what has been called the Luschan Collection (Deutsche Welle 2016; Tharoor 2016). This collection is named after Felix Ritter von Luschan (11 August 1854–7 February 1924), who gathered these remains between 1885 and 1920. It is said to contain 4,600 skulls and other artefacts (Deutsche Welle 2016; Tharoor 2016).

It is plausible to speculate that other institutions are also in possession of similarly acquired human remains. This is because an extensive network and market for the circulation of human remains and artefacts existed in colonial times. In the case of Egyptology for example, such circulations have been codified into an academic discipline. Researchers suggest that some "doctors in the colonies sent remains to their old universities; officers in the crews of exploring ships collected skulls and brought them home, sometimes as part of their remit; amateur scientists, anthropologists, missionaries and Protectors of Aborigines, amongst others, all believed in the claimed scientific importance of remains and sent them back to Europe. Some were purchased directly from collectors or from specialised auction rooms, and some were provided by overseas museums […] some were donated" (Layton / Shennan / Stone 2006: 83).

In the light of this, it remains anybody's guess as to how many more were smuggled into Germany and across Europe to private collectors and others who toured Africa as 'hunters'. Evidence suggests that during colonialism, 'Bushmen hunting' was considered as a popular sport much like big game hunting today (Gordon 2009: 29). It is equally difficult to suggest estimates about the number of skulls from Namibia in Germany. Given the two countries' 'entangled history and politics', it is probable that the number would be significant (Kössler 2008: 313). The importance of *Exhibit B* lies in the manner in which it highlights and echoes the legacy and continuities of racial science. The performance symbolically and affec-

tively recovers the human remains from the 'basements' where they were consigned after the 'sciences' that underpinned their importation became discredited.

9 Conclusion: Disrupting the colonial gaze

In and through performance, *Exhibit B* troubles notions of time and the amnesia that seems to follow colonial atrocities. I would suggest that the performance's efficacy lies in the affective manner in which the performance demands live participation and identification from the audience. In replicating the human zoos' notions of the exotic, mute confined primitive, the performance stimulates contemporary reflection and historical remembrance of its colonial usage and persistence in the present. The protestors who blocked and called for a ban on the show objected to the efficacy of performance and the performance maker on account of his race to contribute to the ongoing de-colonial work. They felt that the show replicated, rather than repudiated racial bias and stereotypes. They argued that the performance did not do enough in uncovering and undoing colonial practices, mind-sets and epistemologies by materialising stories of dehumanisation and racist objectifications. They argued that the performance would have the counter effect and reinforce rather than challenge racial bias.

Framing *Exhibit B* as an ethnographic display shows the complementarity of the archive and performance repertoire in transmitting the memory of the brutalities of colonial history. While rooting the performance in the colonial archive, Brett Bailey creates a performance repertoire that uses the liveness of performance to animate the archive into an embodied commemoration of colonial genocides and their present day legacies. Through its performativity, *Exhibit B* stands as an ephemeral and embodied *lieu de mémoire* in commemoration of the often unacknowledged experiences of colonial genocide (Nora / Kritzman 1996: xvii). *Exhibit B* evokes and condenses the memory of five centuries of invasion, annihilation, enslavement, and dehumanisation that define the colonial 'civilising mission' through the aestheticisation of pain. In placing the 'archive' on the bodies of the performers, or making the 'archive' the 'repertoire', *Exhibit B* becomes disruptive by lending corporeal visibility to the memory of the sexual abuse that marked Kaiser Wilhelm's colonial genocide (Taylor 2003: 20).

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