

# A Novel Archive of Intimacy: Sex and the Struggle in Gerald Kraak's *Ice in the Lungs*

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## Summary

Tracing the figure of the archive, this article examines the ways in which official sites of memorialisation either erase or radically desexualise the histories of sexual minorities. Furthermore, the article examines the epistemological status of fiction as an alternative archive of marginalised voices and experiences. I focus particularly on Gerald Kraak's novel *Ice in the Lungs* (2006) to reveal the importance of literature in reinscribing a gay cultural history into discourses of the apartheid era. The text does this in a way that celebrates eroticism and resists desexualising or sanitising representational impulses. The novel speaks to the silences in official sites of history-making in South Africa and reveals the complex intersections of sex and struggle in the antiapartheid movement. The article also considers how Kraak's novel interrogates the current idealisation of the liberation movement by exposing the homo-prejudice that characterised large parts of it. While the centrality of race in the ideological machinations of the apartheid regime is widely acknowledged, Kraak's novel attests to the need to explore the palimpsest of oppressive mechanisms exercised not only by the state but by those within the liberation movement itself.

## Opsomming

Deur die gebruik van die nosie van die argief bestudeer hierdie artikel die maniere waarop amptelike herdenkingsplekke óf die geskiedenis van seksuele minderhede uitvee, óf dit radikaal deseksualiseer. Verder ondersoek die artikel die epistemologiese status van fiksie as 'n alternatiewe argief van gemarginaliseerde stemme en ervarings. Ek fokus veral op Gerald Kraak se roman *Ice in the Lungs* (2006), om die belangrikheid van literatuur in die herinskrywing van 'n gay-kulturele geskiedenis in diskoerse van die apartheidsera te toon. Die teks doen dit op 'n manier wat erotiek besing en die versoeking weerstaan om verteenwoordigende impulse te deseksualiseer of te suiwer. Die roman spreek tot die stiltes in amptelike plekke in Suid-Afrika waar geskiedenis gemaak word, en onthul die komplekse kruispunte van seks en stryd in die anti-apartheid-beweging. Die artikel oorweeg ook hoe Kraak se roman die huidige idealisering van die bevrydingsbeweging ondersoek deur die homo-vooroordeel wat kenmerkend was van groot dele daarvan, bloot te lê. Hoewel die sentraliteit van ras in die ideologiese sameswerings van die apartheidsbewind wyd erken word, getuig Kraak se roman van die behoefte om die palimpse van onderdrukkende meganismes te verken wat nie net deur die staat beoefen word nie, maar ook deur diegene in die bevrydingsbeweging self.

JLS/TLW 31(3), Sept./Sep. 2015  
ISSN 0256-4718/Online 1753-5387  
© JLS/TLW  
DOI: 10.1080/02564718.2015.12271



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[A]n archive of sexuality and gay and lesbian life [...] must preserve and produce not just knowledge but feeling. Lesbian and gay history demands a radical archive of emotion in order to document intimacy, sexuality, love, and activism – all areas of experience that are difficult to chronicle through the materials of a traditional archive.

(Cvetkovich 2003: 241)

Taking its cue from Ann Cvetkovich's seminal text, *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures*,<sup>1</sup> this article examines the limitations of traditional archives and argues for the recognition of fiction as a complementary archive of same-sex subjectivities. The traditional understanding of the archive as an aging collection of documentary evidence and objects continues to dominate popular understandings of archival and museum holdings. However, South Africa has a long history of exclusionary systems of knowledge production that has resulted in the erasure of experiences, perspectives, and histories of marginalised groups. This problem is compounded, as Cvetkovich suggests, when those experiences are differentiated by sexuality and circumscribed by the operations of heteronormativity.<sup>2</sup> These patterns of exclusion are evidenced by the considerable absence of same-sex intimacies in official discourses of the antiapartheid movement. This article evaluates the epistemological legitimacy of fiction and its necessity as a record of alternative narratives of the past. Focusing on Gerald Kraak's award-winning – though largely neglected – novel *Ice in the Lungs* (2006), this article maps the ways in which the text reinscribes a gay<sup>3</sup>

1. Cvetkovich considers the relationships between sex, trauma, and lesbian public cultures. *An Archive of Feelings* constitutes a radical engagement with the forms and functions of archives and is itself an archive of lesbian subjectivities in their many manifestations, drawing on materials ranging from film and fiction to punk music and ephemeral objects such as matchboxes.
2. Originally coined by Michael Warner (1991: 3) and largely synonymous with what Adrienne Rich (1980: 632) calls "compulsory heterosexuality", the term "heteronormativity" refers to the social and cultural forces that position heterosexuality and traditional gender identities as normative.
3. While I am aware of the limitations of using nomenclature grounded in specific gay and lesbian identity markers that inevitably conflate same-sex intimacies with particular (Western) identities, I do so in this article because it is the language and identity-based discourse used by Kraak throughout the

cultural presence into South African historiography and provides a type of gay cultural history. Set in 1976 in the context of escalating violence and political activism, Kraak's novel juxtaposes the same-sex relationship between Matt and Paul with the highly politicised anti-apartheid movement in Cape Town. Kraak's novel subverts conventional idealised representations of the struggle and gives expression to the experiences of gay men during the apartheid era. The complex intersection of their anti-apartheid activism with the intense intimacy of their relationship has devastating consequences, both emotionally and politically. That their activist-friends are for the most part oblivious to their illicit sexual activities speaks to the culture of homophobia and silencing that characterised this period. Cvetkovich (2003: 8) insists that because gay and lesbian cultures are "[f]orged around sexuality and intimacy, and hence forms of privacy and invisibility that are both chosen and enforced, [they] often leave ephemeral and unusual traces". Significantly, the fictional archive that is Kraak's novel shares Cvetkovich's (2003: 5) refusal to "accept a desexualized or sanitized version of queer culture as the price for inclusion within the national public sphere". Rather, as my close reading of the text will show, the same-sex corporeal intimacies are depicted with complexity, candour, and a celebratory flair for what Ken Plummer (2003: 525-526) calls "the lustily erotic". This contrasts the heteronormative strictures and desexualising tendencies of traditional archival and museum collections. My reading of Kraak's novel as an archive of intimacy depends on neither physical materiality nor forensic factuality: rather by reading fiction as a type of cultural memory, the designation "archive" comes to function as a status of epistemological legitimacy. Recognising fiction as a complementary archive resists the discursive hegemony of singular histories as the moral complexities, internal contradictions and erasures by dominant narratives are exposed. Of course, literature does not replace traditional, formalised historical accounts of the past but rather works to complicate and deepen them. Tracing the figure of the archive allows us, then, to interrogate the relationships between sex and power, fiction and history, and the current deification of the anti-apartheid movement.

Despite its obvious limitations, the traditional formulation of the archive continues to dominate. Achille Mbembe's (2002: 19) discussion of the archive, for instance, illustrates this perspective: "[t]here cannot [...] be a definition of 'archives' that does not encompass both the building itself and the documents stored there", indicating that the archive building is "a symbol of a public institution, which is one of the organs of a constituted state". This description situates the archive as a collection of documents that forms the basis of official sites of knowledge production. However, this take

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novel: terms such as "homosexual", "gay" and "queer" are used almost interchangeably in his text.

on the archive is inseparable from particular historical configurations of power relations that produced it. One cannot overstate the significant role that these power relations have played in the enforcement of particular hierarchies of epistemological legitimacy. Bhekizizwe Peterson (2002: 30), in his criticism of the traces of racism in South African archives, writes that “we have to establish what other forms of knowledge and records have been deemed inconsequential and inappropriate and consequently excluded from archival holdings”. Although he is referring particularly to the systematic exclusion of black African experiences and epistemologies, his comments are equally applicable to the marginalisation of non-normative sexual public cultures in South African historiography.

Drawing on Anne Stoler’s (2002: 85) insistence that even the most traditional archives are not only “sites of knowledge retrieval but knowledge production”, it is my claim here that there is an inherent subjectivity and unreliability that underscores all archival forms. Significantly, Kraak acknowledges and foregrounds this subjective component of textual narrative production in *Ice in the Lungs* when George, one of the peripheral narrators in the novel, says of the characters who came to his restaurant: “Some of them indulged my stories about Greece, repeated and embellished so often in the telling that I could no longer disentangle myth from fact” (Kraak 2006: 13). The author reveals the production of history as something that is informed by subjective perspectives and specific political contexts. Quoting Michel Foucault, Stoler (2002: 87) reminds us that “the archive is not an institution but ‘the law of what can be said’”. In a somewhat similar vein, Jacques Derrida in “Archive Fever” problematises the notion that the contents of an archive are the objective and stable foundations on which collective identities and political histories can be built, and describes the archive as “hypomnesic” (1995: 14). The incomplete, fragmented and weakened capacity for memory that characterises even traditional archives is due in large part to the subjective and interpretive figure that inadvertently but unavoidably underscores all archival work. Elsewhere Derrida reads South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) as an archive and affirms its significance as one of the dominant bases of the post-apartheid history-making project:

This archive is not simply a mass of facts, of true facts, to be gathered and delivered and made available. They are interpreted facts, interpreted by the witnesses of course (testimony is not simply the unveiling of a truth; a testimony is an active interpretation of what happened) [...] [T]he Commissioners, the people in charge, those who have the power in fact to build the archive and to publish the archive and to interpret the archive, have, of course, their own interpretations, their own motivations, their own pre-shaped schemes of interpretation.

(Derrida 2002: 50)

Brent Harris (2002: 163) echoes this criticism of the state-sanctioned writing of official histories when he states that the Commission was empowered not only to “recall” but to “impose history” – a history, I would argue, that is implicitly exclusionary and heteronormative. This becomes all the more troubling when one considers the erasure of gay histories and experiences from most of these official archives. The seven-volume final report of the TRC, for instance, offers only a single sentence on the experiences of homosexuals during apartheid.<sup>4</sup> This speaks to the limitations of traditional state-sanctioned archives in accounting for the insidious heteronormative violence of the everyday. This heteronormative erasure is similarly evident at the Apartheid Museum in Johannesburg, where the experiences of homosexuals during apartheid (and the concomitant sexual politics and identarian layering of the liberation movement) are reduced to a single corner. This corner contains two large photographs of the first gay pride march in Johannesburg in 1990 and a post box from MaThoko’s famous shebeen in KwaThema.<sup>5</sup> Detail and complexity are elided by the fact that these two images are juxtaposed with similar photographs for both the disability and women’s rights movements. The photographs of these three disparate groups are bundled together under the heading “Taking action for change”, which notes that

[b]etween 1990 and the formal adoption of the new Constitution in 1996, different sectors of civil society mobilised their constituencies to ensure that their rights would be enshrined and protected by the Equality Clause contained in the Bill of Rights.

This statement is followed by a short description that further simplifies and reduces the place of homosexuals in South African history and that appears to deny the disunity and racial divisions that characterised the gay rights movement during apartheid. The problematic desexualisation of official sites of history-making is made even clearer from the way in which the complex affective experiences of homophobia (emanating both from the state and

4. Volume 4 (1998: 124) of the TRC Report states the following: “There were reports of a particular psychologist [in the SADF] who used aversion therapy and electric shocks on homosexual military men as part of a treatment for their ‘gayness’”. This glaring understatement was elucidated by the publication of *The aVersion Project* in 1999 which found widespread institutionalised human rights abuses by healthcare workers against homosexuals in the South African Defence Force (Van Zyl, De Gruchy, Lapinsky, Lewin and Reid 1999).
5. MaThoko’s was a shebeen in KwaThema that functioned not only as a place of safety for vulnerable gay and lesbian youths but also as a meeting place for the local division of the Gays and Lesbians of the Witwatersrand (GLOW) organisation.

from within the liberation movement) become subsumed under transition-era photos of gay antiapartheid activist Simon Nkoli and the gay pride march in 1990. Similarly, the accompanying information board at the Apartheid Museum directs visitors to this corner exhibit where “you can see campaigns waged by people with disabilities, gays and lesbians, as well as women’s rights activists. These campaigns had a direct impact on the content of the new Constitution of 1996”. Locating signifiers of gay and lesbian subjectivities within these politically-attuned discourses of constitutionalism and human rights suggest that it is only in the political and social gains of the 1990s that the significances of gay and lesbian histories lie. This is not an atypical instance in which same-sex love, lust and intimacy – the “humping and pumping, sweatiness [and] sexiness”, to borrow a phrase from Plummer (2003: 525-526) – is subordinated in favour of the political narratives of nation-building. The two photographs at the Apartheid Museum are again framed as evidence of an emergent culture of constitutionalism and political inclusion by another accompanying information board that reads

South Africans did not wait for the outcomes of CODESA to take advantage of the freedoms the new South Africa promised. The antiapartheid struggle focused particularly on ending racial discrimination. Other forms of inequality and oppression were acknowledged, but took second place. Now these struggles could come to the fore.

The “other forms of inequality” to which the board refers inadvertently conflates all non-racial sites of oppression, subordinating the experiences of women, homosexuals and the disabled. Ironically, this only reinforces the erasure that the accompanying photographs attempt to address. It is the conflation of these inequalities that blurs and depersonalises the specificities of lived experiences. The generalised reference to “inequality and oppression” marks a reluctance to engage fully with the extensive and lingering legacies of victimisation for homosexuals and other groups. Similarly, the message board accompanying MaThoko’s post box asks visitors to the museum to “[f]ill in a postcard telling us whether you have ever campaigned for change and post it into [the] post box”. This similarly reduces the significance of this specific cultural artifact to a symbol of oppression generally. Notably, it is not only the erasure of the complexities of quotidian lives that demands a more radical constitution of the archive, but also the desexualisation of these sexual public cultures. While the importance of official sites of memorialisation cannot be negated, literary texts are essential as complementary archives in speaking to the silences asserted by this particular exhibit and others. Glen Retief (1994: 100) argues in a chapter entitled “Keeping sodom out of the laager” that there is a considerable discursive bias in historical discourses in which narratives about apartheid’s

racist and politically oppressive legislation have drastically overshadowed consideration of its moral policing of sexual dissidents. He writes that

[i]t is as if the Immorality Act had never been passed, as if the police had not spent decades trying to stamp out nonconformist eroticism. Such selectivity generates double standards. When draconian legislation is talked about, the Police Act and the Terrorism Act are mentioned, but the Sexual Offences Act, which allows for jail sentences for two men who do nothing more than kiss in public, is invariably overlooked.

(Retief 1994: 100)

While the centrality of racist discrimination and capitalist exploitation in the apartheid regime cannot be denied, we need to explore and account for the interconnecting systems of victimisation and oppression if we are to construct a more nuanced account of the country's past. Kraak (2010) reveals his reasons for writing *Ice in the Lungs* when he says that the novel is "a gay love story set in the time when homosexuality was illegal and when sexual orientation wasn't part of the discourse of the liberation movement". In light of the secrecy that overshadowed the decisions of militarised forces from across the political spectrum (Harris V 2002: 138), there is little enduring documentary evidence of same-sex experiences in these systems. The only significant physical archive of non-heteronormative sexual cultures in South Africa is Gay and Lesbian Memory in Action (GALA) which is engaged in a critical project for the documentation and recording of marginalised narratives of non-heteronormative sexual and gender identities. However, researchers and visitors to the archive have tended to focus on the records of apartheid-era gay and lesbian political organisations as well as famous activists (Reid 2002: 205; Khan 2011). Despite the archive's impressive collection of materials, and the ongoing projects to document non-heteronormative subjectivities, archivist Gabriel Khan (2011) acknowledges that fiction might be necessary to complement their archival material as some of their collections "d[o]n't really reflect the *feel* of the people and their experiences".

In light of the gaps and absences in official histories of the past, Ronit Fainman-Frenkel (2004: 53) argues that "[n]arrative in post-Apartheid South Africa forms a dialogue with both the silences of Apartheid and those of the TRC". Furthermore, she observes that the TRC is "inherently limited in terms of being only one (polemical) narrative of the past", insisting then that "literature is another" (53). In recognition of the important role that fiction plays in capturing the nuances of individual experiences and cultural memory, GALA has recently published its first collection of short stories: *Queer Africa: New and Collected Fiction* (2013). In the preface to the text, editors Karen Martin and Makhosazana Xaba write that

[t]he arts allow us to consider experiences radically different from our own in ways that other forms of representation (research reports, the media, etc.) can't. In imaginative spaces, dominant narratives hold less sway; possibilities we haven't considered suggest themselves.

(2013: vii)

Resistant to mere mimesis, fiction can provide cultural imaginings of the past that contribute to what is already a powerful history-making project at GALA. In an analysis of historical fiction, Ronald Suresh Roberts (2002) offers readers an important analysis of the novels of Nadine Gordimer. Roberts's essay focuses particularly on Gordimer's *Burger's Daughter*, a historical novel that covers the life of antiapartheid activist Bram Fischer and that of his daughter. As Roberts suggests, *Burger's Daughter* inscribes personal affective responses into the context of broader politicised life histories, and it foregrounds the individual subjectivity of the daughter of a leading white antiapartheid activist. This is a perspective that may otherwise have remained obscured by more politically aligned official histories. Roberts calls for the inclusion of art in the archive and insists that

[t]he expansiveness of the archive [...] hinges on the collective farsightedness of [the] onlookers, on their ability to re-cognise – to rethink – what counts as part of the archive, what the contents of the archive are and ought to be, mean and ought to mean.

(2002: 320)

What Roberts means by “onlookers” are the participants in the production of knowledge, including the writers, publishers, and readers of cultural texts. Novels are regularly read for the insights that they offer into alternative cultural configurations or specific subjectivities. As readers, we are regularly conferring archival value on texts. Readers might, for example, draw from Olive Schreiner's *The Story of an African Farm* conclusions about life on agricultural holdings at the turn of the twentieth century, or from Phaswane Mpe's *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* conclusions about the experiences of black men in Johannesburg in the final days of apartheid. Reconstituting the archive, then, depends on our mutual acknowledgement that our perspectives are shaped, at least in part, by works of art and literature. Marilyn Booth (2005) offers a similar study of how a particular work of historical fiction inserts a female cultural presence into the Middle Eastern political history of the nineteenth century. Booth (2005: 277) writes that a novel can act as a “ghost-archive, a record of alternative possibilities and alternative visions that also, through divergent narrative, highlights and shows as arbitrary the boundaries of the official record”.

Mpe (2002: 236) correctly warns that literary historians “should be wary of the discourse of authenticity and instead engage other issues such as what they are told, why it is told and how it is told”. The fictional works produced



by novelists act as the locus for a plethora of experiences and emotions. Importantly, many works of fiction privilege the affective responses of the novelist above the historiographic factuality favoured by traditional archives. Writing particularly about Gordimer, Roberts (2002: 304) argues that novelists possess “a facility that works upon while it stores fragments of perception”. That is, writers embody processes by which emotional responses, social forces of identity formation, cultural phenomena, and personal experiences are distilled into particular narratives – narratives that give expression to particular subjectivities. André Brink (1998: 31) echoes this view and describes the creative process as “impressions from outside and impulses from inside converg[ing] in the mental machinations that produce a quite densely textured result”. Reflecting on the dual functioning of cultural texts – both as representations of particular cultural moments as well as discursive forces of cultural articulation – Roberts (2002: 304) notes that “[t]he writer is immersed in society and society is reciprocally drenched by the individual and collective consciousness of its writers”. In “Archive Fever” Derrida focuses not only on questions of genre but also on a particular literary text. He analyses a historiographic study that concludes with a *fictional* monologue with an author of a work of “historical *fiction*” (Freud in Derrida 1995: 11, my emphasis). Interested in the way in which the former work stages a conversation between historiography and the author’s fictional monologue, Derrida writes:

[i]n a stroke he suspends all axiomatic assurances, norms, and rules which had served him until now in organizing the scientific work, notably historiographic criticism, and in particular its relationship to the known and unknown archive. The very order of knowledge, at least of classical knowledge, is suspended.

(1995: 36)

Furthermore, Derrida (1995: 40) draws on subjective, postmodern conceptions of truth when he comments on the fictional monologue and reflects on the power of cultural history: “[i]n its own way, even if it does not say it, it *makes* the truth”.

Reading *Ice in the Lungs* as a type of gay cultural history foregrounds the representations of same-sex intimacies that have been sidelined by mainstream archives and museums and by dominant modes of literary criticism.<sup>6</sup> Significantly, the paratext of Kraak’s novel – including its title, blurb and cover image – situates the text firmly within a mainstream literary culture and resists reductive classification as a “gay novel”. In addition, the text is published and distributed by a mainstream publisher and is thus better positioned to “seed [itself] in the wider world” – to borrow a phrase from

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6. See Carolin and Frenkel (2013) for a discussion of some specific examples of this in South African literary criticism.

Shaun de Waal (2010). Kraak refuses to sanitise same-sex physical intimacies throughout the novel. For instance, the protagonist and primary narrator Matt describes one of his experiences of oral sex with his boyfriend, Paul:

It had been the sensation of lying unclothed on the sheets, of feeling Paul's skin against the full length of my own, of having his lips on unexplored parts of my body, of his steady, gentle caress with fingers and lips and tongue that had brought me to climax. I came – impelled by a hot centrifugal rush. I heard, as from a distance, my own groaning voice.

(p. 126)

The erotic literary aesthetic in Kraak's novel resonates with some sexually explicit same-sex fiction by earlier South African writers such as Koos Prinsloo and Stephen Gray. While explicit same-sex eroticism remains uncommon in South African literature, what marks Kraak's novel as particularly distinct is the way in which explicit sex between men is located within the antiapartheid movement itself. This is significant not only because the novel archives the transgressive intimacies between gay men during apartheid, but also because it does so in a way that is uncompromisingly celebratory. That being said, Kraak foregrounds the characters' sexual pleasure despite the radical politicisation of their context, refusing the reduction of Matt and Paul to their antiapartheid activities. Matt similarly recounts one of the first times that he and Paul kissed, the sensuality of which is undeniable:

[Paul] tugged me close to his tight body and put his lips into the crease of my neck, biting the soft flesh there. Then he put his hands into my hair, inclined my head backwards, and covered my mouth with his. I entered into a heady communion, a silken comprehension of the membranes of his cheeks, the smooth ridges of his teeth – a merging of sensations that came in waves of giddy sensation from my abdomen, groin, and the back of my head.

(p. 119)

Kraak's description here is simultaneously erotic and assured. The novel does not disavow the variety of sexual acts and pleasures, privileging an affirming eroticism over conservative moralism. *Ice in the Lungs* constitutes a broader archive of sexual practices and the meanings attached to them: while the pleasures of oral sex are accounted for in the novel, Kraak also represents instances of anal sex between men in a way that eschews the prevailing depiction of anal penetration as a privileged signifier of sexual and moral depravity. In *The Quiet Violence of Dreams* (2001), K. Sello Duiker's protagonist explains the cultural significance of anal sex in the public imaginary: anal penetration is "what they persecute us for, that unspeakable thing men do together, corrupting nature. That final act" (Duiker 2001:

314).<sup>7</sup> Matt refers to it similarly as the “most carnal” act that made gay men “the sexual ‘other’” and for which they “would be despised” (Kraak 2006: 133). Kraak’s novel contests this vilification of penetrative sex between men by constructing a literary archive that is nuanced and simultaneously sensual and provocative. The celebratory tone of the following descriptions is significant:

Paul fucked me against the trunk of a fallen tree. He pinned my hands behind my back so that I came without touching myself, and cum lined the depressions in the bark.

(p. 161)

[Dawie] had insisted that I fuck him. He groaned, grappled with the bed sheets, urged me on ... I took to it all with rhapsodic violence, a newly-apprehended understanding of Paul’s abuse of me, of his insistence on domination, on ritual. I thudded into Dawie, drawing from him ever deeper tenors of response. I came inside him, in a sensation so intense that the room came back to me in waves of renewed consciousness.

(p. 267)

This celebratory eroticism undermines conservative and moralist readings of anal sex that tend to co-circulate with heteronormative representational impulses. That being said, the novel also resists the conceptual interdependence of homosexuality and anal penetration in public discourse. While penetrative sex is celebrated in the novel, its centrality as the exclusive signifier of same-sex male intimacies is also contested by Kraak through the mostly chronological structure of Matt’s narrative. Matt’s acknowledgement that he and Paul “have sex often” (131) precedes his first experience of anal sex (132). What is clear is that sex between him and Paul predates penetration and thus the validity of the term “sex” as a marker of same-sex physical intimacy is, accordingly, not dependent on penetration. Kraak’s fictional archive contests both scandalising and desexualising representations as the novel not only complicates the signifying systems around same-sex intimacies but also recovers lust and pleasure from the periphery of South African historiography. In addition, the text reminds us about the complex place of same-sex desires in the struggle by foregrounding the intersection between physical and emotional intimacy. While the novel attempts to normalise casual sex between gay men, it also contains moments of emotional intensity and conflict between Matt and Paul. For instance, following a fight about Matt’s feelings of isolation given the demands of Paul’s political activities, Matt desperately and angrily declares: “Fuck, I wish I wasn’t so in love with you!” (261). Privileging the

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7. See Carolin and Frenkel (2013) for a more detailed discussion of sex in Duiker’s novel.

affective layers that are encoded into cultural texts, Cvetkovich (2003: 7) reminds us that alternative archival forms function as “repositories of feelings and emotions”. Significantly, the invocation of love, loss, and betrayal in the novel does not undermine the text’s celebration of casual sex and the erotic but rather contests how same-sex subjectivities have and continue to be represented.

The fraught and intense relationship between the protagonist and Paul – always under the shadow of both legal sanction by the state and homophobia from within the antiapartheid movement – reveals the entanglements of sex and the struggle. Heteronormativity prescribed idealised ways of “being” in the liberation movement, and these are highlighted and critiqued by Kraak in the text. Matt observes rather derisively that his same-sex desires mean that he is “not the model revolutionary fighting the cause with ‘his’ woman” (74). Further, he exposes the centrality of heteronormativity in the production and maintenance of political identities when he remarks that “[he] was terrified that the identity [he] had so assiduously created in these past few months, that of the reliable political comrade, would be shattered” (75). Nonetheless, the novel contests the apparent universality of heterosexuality as a requirement for legitimate political activism<sup>8</sup> through the frequent juxtapositions of politics and same-sex intimacies. Matt, for example, describes a political poster at UCT displaying student protestors: “A student caught in mid-throw, *muscles tensing in the fabric of his shirt*, one leg lifted from the tar” (67, my emphasis). The eroticisation of the male student in the poster suggests that, for the protagonist at least, same-sex desire can be a legitimate interpretative framework for political struggle. Subsequently, sex and political activism become entangled for Matt, both symbolically and personally. This manifests most clearly in the development of his relationship with Paul. He describes how the “startling intimate gesture” of having Paul’s hand on his thigh intersected with the “impersonality of his political discourse” (111). This is made even more explicit when, after a long conversation about ideology and the antiapartheid movement, Matt concludes simply that “[u]nderneath it all, there was the painful, hot-blooded knowledge that [he] wanted Paul” (112). In addition to numerous instances in the novel where political debates intersect with physical intimacy between Matt and Paul, the novel advances a more radical position: not only are same-sex desires and antiapartheid political activism compatible, but they also come to be mutually defining, at least so far as the protagonist is concerned. Later in the text, for example, Matt articulates his criticism of the “spare intellectualism to which [his] sexual, therefore political, loyalty to Paul seemed to confine [him]” (198). Thereafter, Matt observes that “[he] was disheartened by the shifts in the tenor of [their] sex, in [their] politics – and a feeling of

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8. See Nkoli (1994), Toms (1994), and Nhlapo (2005) for further discussions of compulsory heterosexuality in the struggle.

distilled dread lay under [his] heart. [Paul had] become a symbol of the tension that was gripping the city” (229). In these extracts, it is evident that Matt derives legitimacy for his own political identity from his sexual relationship with Paul. Subsequently, Matt enjoys a weekend of casual sex with Dawie, who unbeknownst to him is a police officer who eventually becomes involved in the legal prosecution of Paul. Matt reflects

Surely I could not have read so wrongly Dawie’s sexual signature. For it seemed to me that if Paul had created for us some sort of sexual church, then I had desecrated not only our relationship but the temple of sex itself.

(p. 297)

It is Dawie’s complicity in the apartheid state that violated the sanctity of Matt’s relationship with Paul. Sex, in this way, simultaneously implicates Matt in and excludes him from the liberation movement. Intimacy, identity, and ideology intersect in various ways in the novel, the complexity and moral ambiguities of which have not been explored or exposed by traditional archives. In her introduction to the short story collection *Queer Africa*, Pumla Gqola (2013: 5) argues that “art is supposed to unsettle alongside its many other roles of illuminating, probing, tickling and theorising the world”. Fiction is significant, then, because of its role in constructing and inflecting alternative discourses, foregrounding affective and experiential implications of cultural histories, and complicating definitive and singular iterations of the past.

In addition to resisting the erasure and desexualisation of gay lives during the struggle, the novel also resists the idealisation and unproblematised heteronormativity of the liberation movement. Derrida (1995: 11) reminds us that “[t]here is no political power without control of the archive, if not of memory”. If the legitimacy of metanarratives is derived from the archive, then the inclusion in the archive of counter-narratives and representations of alternative subjectivities challenges the coherence of the archive and complicates our reading of history. This interrogation of the ambiguities and contradictions of the past is disallowed by many official sites of history-making. The multiplicity of perspectives that the archive should facilitate is important, then, for a number of reasons. Not least of these is the role of the archive in the political deployment of narratives (Mpe 2002: 229). When archives are used to claim legitimacy for singular historical narratives, meaning is foreclosed and the significance and specificities of particular events are collapsed and are presented as predetermined facts of history. In Kraak’s novel bigoted homophobic sentiments are articulated by Temba, an antiapartheid activist who lives in Langa. Temba responds to a photograph of Paris’s gay pride parade stating that it is “disgusting” (210). He states further that “[h]omosexuality is a perversion, a depravity – we don’t have such a thing in *our* culture. It doesn’t exist – it’s an outgrowth of Western decadence” (211). In an earlier article, Kraak (2005: 122) notes that situating

gay identities and homosexual intercourse within a Marxist paradigm as a “bourgeois deviance” was a recurring discursive strategy for the delegitimation of same-sex intimacies. Despite insisting that it simply does not exist in his culture, Temba then discusses the existence of men who have sex with men in the township:

I mean, the things that *stabanes*<sup>9</sup> do are disgusting – one man sticks his cock up the arse of another, like animals. One man sucks the dick of the other. These are half-men – they do the things that women do. It is an insult to *real* men. It’s part of the corruption of bourgeois culture.

(p. 211)

He goes on to say that “we have such people in the townships – but we stone them, burn them!” (211). Temba’s homophobia is initially encoded within notions of African nationalism, then within the politically aligned Marxist concerns about the corrupting influence of bourgeois society, and finally within polarised and reductive interpretations of gender and sexuality. As the dominant political organisation in the liberation movement, the African National Congress (ANC) sought to assure its status as a progressive bastion of gay rights and liberal constitutionalism. Kraak’s novel resists this uncritical idealisation of the liberation movement, however, by highlighting the homophobia that characterised large parts of the struggle. Responding to criticisms of homophobia in the party in 1987, then ANC Director of Information Thabo Mbeki (2005: 149) insisted that the ANC was fully supportive of gay rights and wholly resistant to any prejudice based on sexuality: “[t]he ANC is indeed very firmly committed to removing all forms of discrimination and oppression in a liberated South Africa. [...] That commitment must surely extend to the protection of gay rights”. This position set the tone for the transition-era discourses on sexuality in the country. The tensions, and the broader heteronormative impulse that characterised much of the struggle against apartheid, however, are largely absent from official sites of memorialisation.<sup>10</sup> Fiction is important then, as an alternative archive, to capture the fractures and discontinuities within the movement. The violent homophobia evident in Temba’s comments here refutes the deification of the antiapartheid movement, disarticulating the totalising singular narratives of unity and progressive political thought. The pre-eminent status of political unities in the cohesion of the group of friends is nonetheless made clear by Kraak in a number of instances throughout the

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9. In spite of the varied and inconsistent signification of the term “stabanes” generally, Kraak, according to the glossary at the end of the novel, uses the term to denote the “derogatory reference to homosexual” men (328).

10. See Tatchell (2005) for a more detailed discussion of these homophobic impulses in the ANC.

novel, revealing the shifting and ambiguous signification of non-heteronormative sexualities. Despite the disunity between Matt and Temba following Temba's homophobic diatribe and Matt's admission that he was a "homosexual", this does not undermine their political solidarity. This is most significantly portrayed the day following their argument once they have successfully set up a mechanism to distribute illegal political pamphlets without detection. Matt recalls how Temba

grasped my hand and gave me the three-clench handshake of a township activist. "Fucking fantastic, comrade!" He slapped me on the back and then hugged me in an embracing, muscular hug of comradeship. As he let me free, I caught the shadow of the previous evening's tensions in his glance and feared immediately the revulsion that might follow. But he missed only one beat of time in the street, as our pamphlets came raining down. Then he pulled me to him again and hugged me with fervour.

(pp. 218-219)

The political unity between these two men in this moment, evidenced by the term "comrade", depends on the successful distribution of the pamphlets. It is the solidarity of political struggle that made it possible for them to embrace "with fervour", despite the contestation over heteronormativity underscoring their interaction. The juxtaposition of personal nostalgia with intimations of the struggle reflects the *feel* of the lived experiences as the struggle against apartheid wrought havoc in the personal and intimate lives of its activists. As both a political activist and a proponent of violent homophobia, Temba disrupts the grandiose claims of an unwavering culture of liberal human rights advanced by Mbeki and others. This underscores the archival value of fiction in revealing not only the internal contradictions and discontinuities that characterised the liberation movement, but also how literature can contribute to a more richly textured palimpsestic history.

*Ice in the Lungs* offers a powerful reframing of what has been situated within very narrow conceptions of the struggle, the archive, and the political nature of non-heteronormative sexualities. The absence of gay men and lesbians in dominant narratives and memorialisations of the antiapartheid movement, and the concomitant erasure of same-sex eroticism within those histories, demands a radical reconsideration of history-making in South Africa. Countering both heteronormativity and the prevailing deification of the antiapartheid movement, Kraak's novel inscribes a gay cultural presence while acknowledging the oft-neglected fractures and exclusions that characterised much of the struggle. As Derrida, Foucault and others have made clear, there will always be an impenetrable distance between a past series of events and the histories and narratives that are constructed around them. We therefore require alternative archival forms to prevent the erasure (and by extension, delegitimisation) of alternative narratives from marginal voices. While the centrality of race in the workings of the apartheid regime is

widely acknowledged, Kraak's novel speaks to the need to explore the palimpsest of oppressive mechanisms exercised not only by the state but by those within the liberation movement itself.

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