CHAPTER 2: THE STORY OF THE PALIMPSEST

> Language is an archaeological vehicle ...
> the language we speak is a whole palimpsest
> of human effort and history.
>
> Russel Hoban (1985)

1. Introduction

In this chapter I, explore the origins and methodology of palimpsests and the transition to booknesses. Palimpsests and the philosophy thereof are subsequently discussed by referring to Derrida's (1978) philosophy of deconstruction in Section 5 and Elizabeth Grosz (1994) on inscription in Section 7. I also look at how palimpsests are found in information technology with regard to the internet, tablets and stylus. Palimpsest as revealed through inscription and re-inscription is investigated with a view at the artworks of Cy Twombly[1] (Figure 9 and Figure 10).

Virtual palimpsests are explored through the projections of layered images in *Palimpsest* (2007) (Figure 12) by Marcus Bowcott[2]. I then look at how William Kentridge's[3] lithograph *Cambio* (1999) (Figure 14) is created through the artistic methodology of palimpsest. Palimpsest in installation is revealed in the work of Anne Hamilton's[4] *Palimpsest Experiments* (1966) (Figures 15 & 16). The chapter concludes with a discussion of the object and the concept within the framework of Hakim Bey[5]. Here I will refer to Bey's concept of juxtaposition regarding the palimpsest.

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[1] Cy Twombly studied from 1948 to 1951 at Washington and Lee University in Lexington, VA, at the Museum School in Boston, and at the Art Students League in New York, where he met Robert Rauschenberg, who suggested that Twombly attend Black Mountain College, 1951-1952 (MOMA 78363: Getty Record).

[2] "Marcus Bowcott lives and works in Vancouver BC as a painter and a sculptor. His artworks often explore relationships between natural and industrial landscapes" (Vancouver Biennale 2016).

[3] William Kentridge is a South African artist well known since the 1980s for his socio-political etchings and large scale charcoal drawings. He was innovative in filming the stages of his drawings, frame by frame, to form a narrative in pre-digital video, as well as recording accompanying soundtracks.

[4] "Ann Hamilton is a visual artist internationally recognized for the sensory surrounds of her large-scale multi-media installations" (Anne Hamilton Studio Biography 2016).

[5] Hakim Bey is a pseudonym for Peter Lamborn Wilson (born 1945). An American anarchist author, he is "primarily known for advocating the concept of Temporary Autonomous Zones". The name 'Hakim Bey' has also been used by others, but Wilson is the primary user of the name (Discordia 2018).

2. Origins and methodology

What is a palimpsest? *Webster's Encyclopaedic Dictionary* refers to the palimpsest as "a parchment or tablet which has been reused after previous writing has been erased". It is also defined as "a manuscript on such a palimpsest or tablet" (1989:723). In addition the *Oxford Dictionary* defines the palimpsest as an *overwritten* manuscript such as "a parchment on which writing has been applied over earlier writing which has been erased" (2005:646).

The term palimpsest originally referred to a wax tablet inscribed, written, erased and rewritten on – an early form of capturing oral information. These wax tablets mark the transition from oral tradition to record writing capturing the word – information written and rewritten. Palimpsest signifies the documentation, control and manipulation of information.

The tool for this practice, a tablet, has now become an electronic device, yet still tapped and 'inscribed' with a *stylus* to record and access information, often from the internet. This is a form of virtual palimpsest. The word "palimpsest" has its origins in the Greek word "*palimpsestus*" for "palin" meaning "again"; and "*psestos*" from "*psen*" meaning "to rub smooth" (1989:723). A palimpsest is therefore a multi-layered record.

The best-known ancient palimpsest is the *Codex Ephraemi Rescriptus* (Figure 4) from the fifth century CE. Here the original fifth-century text of the Bible, is overwritten with twelfth-century sermons of the Christian St Ephrem. By using contemporary technology such as infra-red and digital enhancement techniques, previously erased texts in palimpsests can be recovered (The Electronic Labyrinth Palimpsest 2018).

Figure 4: Codex Ephraemi Rescriptus (The S.S. Teacher's Edition – the Holy Bible – Plate XXIV)

The Chicago School of Media Theory (Lucian Chicago 2016) explains that during the Middle Ages, parchments were made from vellum[6], which was consequently recycled due to their scarcity, suggesting that:

> [C]hemical agents were used in the recycling process to erase the existing text; the new text was subsequently superimposed onto the clean sheet. With time however the traces of old writing reappeared, leading to the creation of a palimpsest. Palimpsests are therefore the product of a layering of texts over a period of time.

In other words, a palimpsest is a multi-layered record created by inscription and erasure.

The Institute for Advanced Technology in the Humanities, Virginia University, also maintains that "[t]he motive for making palimpsests seems to have been largely economic" but that "reusing parchment was cheaper than preparing new skin". There is also the possibility that "[a]nother motive may have been directed by the desire of Church officials to 'convert' pagan Greek script by overlaying it with the word of God" (Jefferson Village 2017).

The concept of palimpsests existed in a time where goddesses formed part of faith and religion. The goddess of transcribing is referred to as *Nisaba*, the Sumerian goddess of *vegetation* and writing and her symbol is the *calamus*[7]. "The Sumerians were the first people to use writing, for keeping accounts and, by extension, inter alia, as a substitute for the oral tradition" (Knappert 1981:iv). By contrast, the Egyptian goddess was *Seshat*, goddess of *wisdom*, *knowledge* and writing.

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[6] Vellum was smooth and treated animal skin such as sheep, goat or calf.
[7] The *calamus* is the instrument used for impressing writing into soft clay.

Palimpsests therefore mark the transition from oral tradition to record writing capturing the word – information written and rewritten. Herein lies the control of information. The Culture and Media Theory Blogspot suggests that:

> [t]he [p]alimpsest introduces the *idea of erasure as part of a layering process.* There can be a fluid relationship between these layers. Texts and erasures are superimposed to bring about other texts and erasures. A new erasure creates text; a new text creates erasure.

This embodies the concept of the cyclical notion of inscription and erasure. (Culture and Media Theory 2015).

3. Transitions: from palimpsests to booknesses

As mentioned, the tablets[8] were originally made of wax, then of wood but also of stone. Originally, vellum manuscripts were used, and then later papyrus and parchment.[9] Whereas vellum could be scraped clean, strictly speaking, papyrus could not withstand scraping erasure, but only that of washing, due to the nature of the substance.

Scrolls are said to have originated with the Egyptians. The ancient religious writings, *The Dead Sea Scrolls* (Figure 5), are considered "the most important religious texts in the Western world" and are the most well-known examples. These were discovered in the remote Qumran caves of the inhospitable and arid West Bank in 1947. Andrew Lawler (2010:1) of The Smithsonian describes them as:

> comprising more than 800 documents made of animal skin, papyrus and even forged copper. [They] deepened our understanding of the Bible and shed light on the histories of Judaism and Christianity. Among the texts are parts of every book of the Hebrew canon – what Christians call the Old Testament – except the book of Esther. The scrolls also contain a collection of previously unknown hymns, prayers, commentaries, mystical formulas and the earliest version of the Ten Commandments. Most were written between 200 B.C. and the period prior to the failed Jewish revolt to gain political and religious independence from Rome that lasted from A.D. 66 to 70 – predating by 8 to 11 centuries the oldest previously known Hebrew text of the Jewish Bible.

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[8] The *Meriam-Webster Dictionary* describes the tablet as "a flat slab or plaque suited for or bearing an inscription: a thin slab or one of a set of portable sheets used for writing". (2017).
[9] Parchment refers to early paper scrolls defined by the *Collins* dictionary as "a long roll of paper or a similar material with writing on it" (2017).

Figure 5*:* Dead Sea Scrolls. Commentary on Habakkuk Scroll. (Google Art Project)

The scroll shown in Figure 5 eventually became the codex as shown in Figure 6, which developed into a book, originally handwritten and copied, and later printed and reprinted. "The codex consists of individual pages, loosely attached and bound with cloth or wood" (Beal 2008).

Figure 6: *The Maya. The Madrid Codex* (left) and a reproduction in Copan, Honduras (right) (Wikimedia Commons 2021).

Rutherford Withus' scroll (Figure 7) is a contemporary interpretation of the *xuanfeng zhuang* scroll design[10] which physically illustrates the transition from scroll to book.

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[10] "The xuanfeng zhuang scroll design was estimated to have been invented during late Tang dynasty in China (618-907 AD)" (Phillips 2016:1).
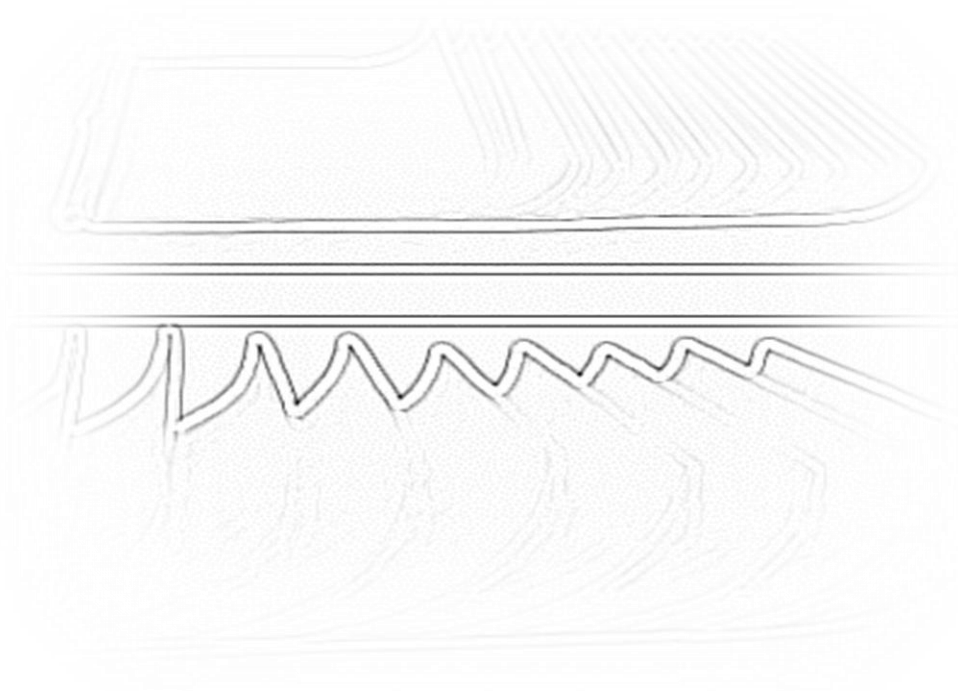
Figure 7: Rutherford Witthus, *Skip for Joy.* 11.25 x 20, 2005 (Art & Books Journal website 2016).

In today's world, especially in the age of virtual books such as those on Kindle, the book has been revisited as *the book as object* in *Booknesses* (Figure 8); where the process of palimpsest can be applied to the construction and deconstruction of the book. My artist's workbook on the Waterberg (see Chapter 4) forms such a receptacle of information and experiences. Wordpress defines booknesses as:

> the qualities which have to do with a book. In its simplest meaning the term covers the packaging of multiple planes held together in fixed or variable sequence by some kind of hinging mechanism, support, or container, associated with a visual/verbal content called a text. The term should not strictly speaking include pre-codex carriers of text such as the scroll or the clay tablet, in fact nothing on a single leaf or planar surface such as a TV screen, poster or hand-bill (Artsbooks Blog 2017).

Also "[t]he book is the hinged multi-planar vehicle or substance on which texts, verbal, or tactile (the latter would include braille and other relief or embossed effects, found objects, pop-ups) may be written, drawn, reproduced, printed or assembled" (Phillips 2016:1) (see Figure 8).
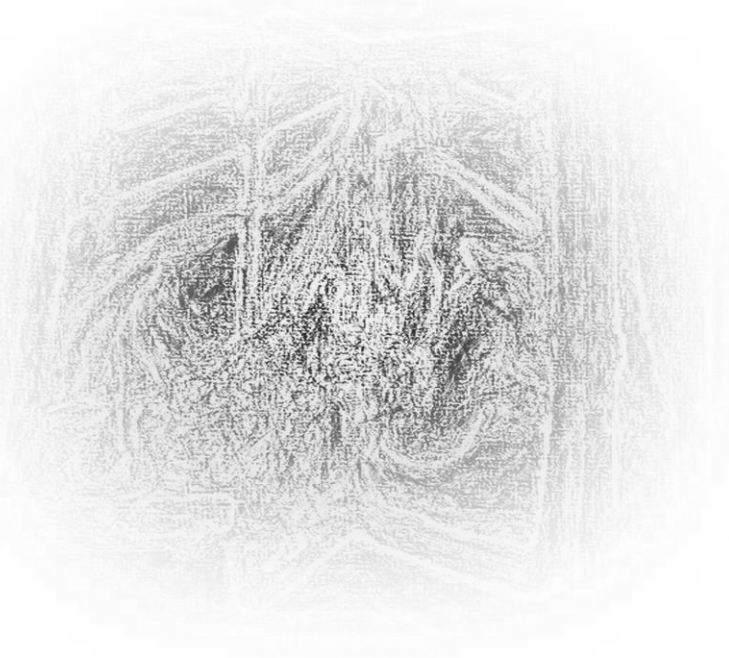
Figure 8: Artists' Books (Jack Ginsberg Collection Booknesses 2017).

Parallels to the palimpsest can be drawn with the pre-digital age of typewriters, where carbon copies were used to type a page and copy simultaneously. When these sheets of carbon became over-used, they showed layers of information typed over each other when held up to the light. I used this process of transcribing photographed and printed images into *The Book of the Waterberg* (Chapter 4).

In typing, correction liquid was often used to *correct* (erase for retyping) and sometimes the original text showed through. Photocopying and scanning bring to mind similar processes of repeating information. Again, we have the process of inscription and re-inscription, but through different media and technological processes.

4. Palimpsests in information technology

The concept of the palimpsest as process continues through printing and reprinting, new editions of books being updated through reviewing, researching and rewriting. This now becomes the virtual palimpsest on the illuminated screen of the computer, laptop, tablet or mobile phone.

Old websites of information on the internet, although virtual, are said to resemble palimpsests through layers of updated information (whilst the older information that is retained may be saved offline or even in the archive of changes housed within a website of said changes). This knowledge is continuously updated digitally and virtually.

Thus we leapfrog from actual to virtual, from tablet and stylus (inscribing and re-inscribing information – wiping the tablet clean) to tablet (mobile phone) and stylus with the world of information in one's hand. This electronic tablet enables the *wiping and swiping* of information – the moving back and forth but not totally erasing as it is always there – accessible. Douglas Adams' *The Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy* (1979) embodied this concept with the *Guide*, a science fiction electronic tablet before its time. Now, today, science fiction is no longer fiction – it has in fact become our *modus operandi* in contemporary communication as we constantly use our mobile phones, tablets and laptop computers.

5. Palimpsests of philosophy

Palimpsests of trace – erasure – inscription – re-inscription ... absence created by presence ... presence created by absence ...

In his *Memoires for Paul De Man* (1986), Jacques Derrida defines deconstruction as follows:

> The very condition of a deconstruction may be at work in the work, within the system to be deconstructed. It may already be located there, already at work. Not at the center, but in an eccentric center, in a corner whose eccentricity assures the solid concentration of the system, participating in the construction of what it, at the same time, threatens to deconstruct. One might then be inclined to reach this conclusion: deconstruction is not an operation that supervenes afterwards, from the outside, one fine day. It is always already at work in the work. Since the destructive force of deconstruction is always already contained within the very architecture of the work, all one would finally have to do to be able to deconstruct, given this always already, is to do memory work.

Derrida's philosophy of deconstruction engenders an 'archaeological' approach of "excavation and discovery" in order to remove sedimentary layers of thinking and meaning, "... past experience and present consciousness" (Jackson & Mazzie 2008:180). Influential architects such as Peter Eisenman and Bernard Tschumi served as inspiration here. With regard to past experience and present consciousness resulting from the influence of Freud and psychoanalysis, our

present consciousness determines our past experiences, and our past experience determines our present consciousness. These sedimentary and determining layers require excavation – deconstruction and reconstruction. This is expressed by Derrida (1972: 35) as follows:

> The "a" of différance also reminds that spacing is timing, deviation, retardation, by which intuition, perception, consummation, in a word, the relation with the present, the reference to a present reality, to an entity are always differed. Differed because of the very principle of the difference that wants an element to not work and not signify, to not acquire nor provide its 'sense', unless by referring to another element past or future, in an economy of traces.

The concepts of 'erasure' and 'trace' in Derrida's writing set up the notion of the palimpsest. These concepts of palimpsest are reflected in the intertextuality of postmodern writing which "provide[s] a model for the function of writing" as

> the palimpsest foregrounds the fact that all writing takes place *in the presence of other writings*: palimpsests subvert the concept of the author as the sole originary source of her work, and thus defer the 'meaning' of a work down an endless chain of signification (Ferreira-Meyers 2008: 204-214).

Thus it provides a means of 'reading' palimpsests and peeling back layers of meaning in a deconstructive post-structural approach. It is this notion of the palimpsest which runs throughout the research, both writing and material practice of this study. This is especially relevant today in the strong drive for decolonisation in Africa. Can we decolonise the Waterberg, I wonder? Or will that layer of colonisation always continue to 'read' through our layers of perception of the Waterberg, and 'undershadow" the contemporary sublime and protected ecological site of today?

In his essay "A Note upon the Mystic Writing-Pad" (German, ca. 1925, this English version 1959), Sigmund Freud refers to the concept of the palimpsest as a metaphor for "perceptual and memory apparatus". The mystic writing–pad[11] was a toy and carnival novelty for recording actuality. Through using metaphorical analysis of how the psyche 'records' material, of how one experiences the world through traces of previous experiences, Freud (1959:5) likens the palimpsest to

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[11] The mystic writing pad consisted of a carbon or waxed piece of cardboard covered by a piece of plastic. After writing or drawing on the plastic, it could be lifted and what was inscribed, magically disappeared. Sometimes traces of the original inscription were retained by the carbon.

the example of The Mystic Writing Pad. Again, we see the process of inscription-erasure-and-re-inscription.

In O*f grammatology,* Derrida (1978:196-231) employs Freud's thinking in his deconstructive post-structural approach and concludes that perception is a kind of writing machine like the Mystic Writing Pad:

> [C]ommenting on Freud's metaphor, [Derrida] notes the fact that the marks on the pad are not visible due to the stylus leaving a deposit on the plastic sheet. Instead the marks only become visible because of the contact with the subsurface of the carbon or wax (Quin 2000).

In relation to the above, Derrida, claims: "None of us apprehend the world directly, but only retrospectively, our sense of that which is beyond ourselves is the product of previous memories, previous writings." "Writing," Derrida says, "... supplements perception before perception even appears to itself". As explained by *The Chicago School of Media Theory*, University of Chicago the "... 'fantasy' of the palimpsest of the mind results in a 'spectralization of the self' which inevitably leads to a 'spectralization of temporality'". It is further noted that "the palimpsest represents what Derrida describes as a 'non-contemporaneity with itself of the living present.'"

Furthermore,

> The present that the palimpsest projects, is constructed by the unintended presence of texts from the past and the possibility of the inscription of future texts. Therefore, the palimpsest "evidences the spectrality of any present moment which already contains with it (elements of) 'past', 'present' and 'future' (Dillon 2007: 243-263).

Thus, the palimpsest becomes a conceptual tool for changing vision in the face of new information and perceptions – a continuous revision of the changing consciousness of self – with 'conscious' becoming referential through writing. It is a continuous thinking and rethinking of mindset.

6. Palimpsest – inscription and erasure

The process of the palimpsest is inscription, erasure and re-inscrption. In art this is evidenced by the work of Cy Twombly in Figure 9 and Figure 10.

Figure 9: Cy Twombly. *Fifty days at Iliam*, 1978. Oil, oil crayon and graphite on canvas. (Collections of the Philadelphia Museum of Art) *(Wikimedia Commons 2021).*

Twombly's large paintings and drawings with their process of application and erasure can be considered palimpsests in their mode of production. The Getty record from the Museum of Modern Art refers to Twombly as "... most well-known for his large paintings populated with scribbled marks, calligraphic or graffiti-like words, letters, numbers, and references to Classical culture" (MoMA 78363: Getty Record). Both these artworks are palimpsests of inscription and erasure. This is evidenced by the layers of mark-making, where previous inscriptions show through the layers.

The text for Twombly's exhibition at the Tate Modern in 2008 refers:

> There is so much to Cy Twombly's paintings, especially of the 1950s and 1960s, and their orchestration is as sly as it is sophisticated. You can look and say this is just a raft of stupidities and inanities, a palimpsest of the half-begun and never-completed. But his art feels rich and urgent. If only you could work out what the secret was, or how to decipher it (Searle 2008:1).

Figure 10**:** Cy Twombly. *Untitled.* 1957. (Berardo Collection, Centro Cultural de Belem, Lisbon, Portugal) *(Wikimedia Commons 2021).*

The MoMA catalogue for Twombly's retrospective exhibition in 1994 also refers to his mode of production as the process of palimpsest:

> The discontinuous strokes of these works include a mix of casual meander and insistent repetition, as well as recurrent evidence that the artist has returned to obliterate or embellish — or to encircle, isolate, and "frame" — earlier moments of drawing or casual incidents in paint (Varnedou 1994: 28).

Barthes says of Twombly that he "seems to cover up other marks, as if he wanted to erase them" but "without really wanting to since these marks remain faintly visible under the layer covering them". He maintains that …

> … this is a subtle dialectic: the artist pretends to have 'spoiled' some piece of his canvas and to have wanted to erase it; but then he spoils this erasure in its turn; and these two superimposed 'failures' produce a kind of palimpsest (1985:179-80).

7. Palimpsest as concept – the female body as landscape

In Chapter 5 of her book *Volatile bodies* Elizabeth Grosz (1994:17) explores the history of the concept of the palimpsest and its applications under the title of "Nietzsche and the choreography of knowledge". She explains how the term

palimpsest can be applied from an eco-feminist perspective and related to the corporeality of the female body: "Patriarchy is viewed as culturally inscribing on female corporeality a sexuality which is both foreign to it, and also shows a limitation in notions which align themselves with male perceptions and desires" (Grosz 1994:14). In this way the female body becomes a material surface for inscription, one that is constantly written and rewritten upon by patriarchal culture. Here we see the domination of male perception of the female body in the roles of the dominator and the dominated.

This concept also applies to colonialism, as culturally inscribing upon the very body of the colonised, an identity and value system which is alien to them. Therefore,

> … the determining condition of what we refer to as post-colonial cultures is the historical phenomenon of colonialism, with its range of material practices and effects, such as transportation, slavery, displacement, emigration, and racial and cultural discrimination. These material conditions and their relationship to questions of ideology and representation are at the heart of the most vigorous debates in recent postcolonial theory (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffen 2006:7).

The above conditions are evidenced through the German-Herero War and ensuant Genocide at the Waterberg (1904) and the consequent German occupation (see Chapter 3). Consequently, contemporary cultures are comprised of geomorphic layers of colonial sediment and post-independent sentiment forming a palimpsest of varying socio-cultural and political inscriptions that may be read through one another.

That colonialism was a race for the acquisitioning of 'new' land and resources raises postcolonial issues of land rights and ownership. In the introduction, I already referred to William Boyd's borrowing of W.G. Hoskins's argument that a landscape can be "read" as a "historical palimpsest" with layered stretches of sedimentation (Boyd 2013a:1). As already mentioned, this was the metaphor that sparked the initial visual inspiration for my artistic exploration of Waterberg sand sites. However, I expand the metaphor of the historical palimpsest to encompass eco-geo-cultural history and identity, since the concept of the palimpsest occurs not only in (masculine) political and military history, but also in ecology and geology, as time rewriting the terrain continuously.

Sand certainly plays an important role in this, especially in the makings of the Namib Desert[12]:

> The sands that make up the sand sea are a consequence of erosional processes that take place within the Orange River valley and areas further to the south. As sand-laden waters drop their suspended loads into the Atlantic, onshore currents deposit them along the shore. The prevailing south west winds then pick up and redeposit the sand in the form of massive dunes in the widespread sand sea, the largest sand dunes in the world. In areas where the supply of sand is reduced because of the inability of the sand to cross riverbeds, the winds also scour the land to form large gravel plains (Spriggs 2016:1).

Ralph Bagnold (1974:19-20) explains that the movement of sand, known as saltation[13], is how sand travels and rewrites the terrain[14]. In other words, the sand particles 'bounce' from one to the other, creating movement – a form of material writing through which the land and earth itself become a palimpsest.

8. New media: virtual palimpsests

The Chicago School of Media Theory, in its article "Theorizing media since 2003", describes the internet as a "virtual palimpsest" which through …

> … its obsession with being current, projects itself as a virtual palimpsest. Like webpages, the parchments of vellum constantly get refreshed to reflect current trends, practices and preoccupations. Though many elements of structure and content remain unchanged, there is still an emphasis that the internet places on immediacy, or on the current. The old pages that are written over can consequently, at best, be archived. Webpages are also loaded with hypertext or hyperlinks which ascribe a sense of multi-linearity, characteristic of the palimpsest, to our viewing experience (2016).

Against this concept, the illuminated screen as a framing device for information refers to the Japanese screen – which is mentioned by Grosz in *Chaos, territory and art* with regard to Deleuze and the framing of the earth, evolution and art. She maintains that "screens emphasize the void" (Grosz 2008:64) – describing the

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[12] The Namib Desert comprises of the Skeleton Coast and the Kaokoveld in the north, and the widespread Namib Sand Sea along the central coast (Spriggs 2016:1).

[13] Bagnold acknowledges the originator of the term, as G.K. Gilbert.

[14] Brigadier Ralph Bagnold (1896-1990) was the founder and first commander of the British Army Long Range Desert Group during World War Two. His book *The physics of blown sand and desert dunes* laid the foundation for the scientific investigation of the transport of sand by wind (Encyclopedia.com).

screen as a plane for virtual projection – a hybrid wall-window-mirror (Grosz 2008:20). This leads to a perception of palimpsest as method/framing device. This also inspired my work in Chapter 4 where I experiment with illuminating the sand palimpsests of the Waterberg. An example of the illuminated palimpsests of Marcus Bowcott can be seen in Figure 11 and Figure 12.
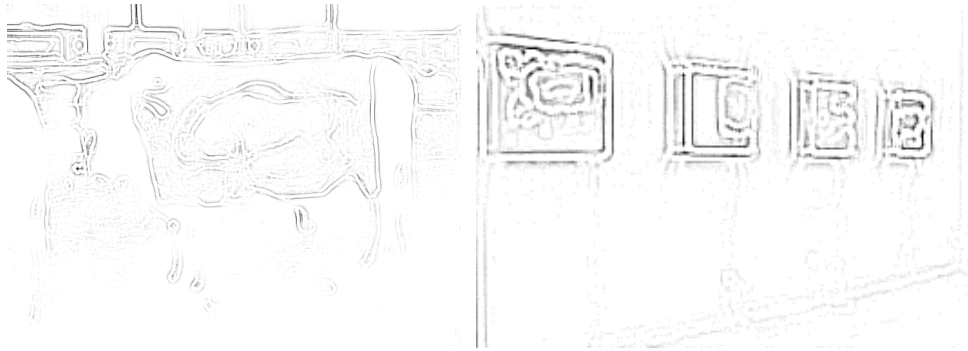

Figure 11**:** Marcus Bowcott (*Palimpsest* 2007), Left.
Figure 12: Exhibition (Marcus Bowcott 2007), Right.

Marcus Bowcott's projections of *illuminated palimpsests* of layered images create the effect of palimpsest as a contemporary approach using modern technology. These illuminated screens contribute towards yet another level of associated perception. A juxtaposition of the hunter-gatherer and the pastoralist is created in the supposition of layers. The wild bison hunter is juxtaposed with domesticated cattle – once were bison.

9. Palimpsest as methodology

By using the overall concept of the palimpsest (Grosz 1994:17) as a methodology in itself, both the theory and methodology related to my project can be explored in relation to each another. The palimpsest as methodology creates parallels between thesis writing and aesthetic creation, the working and reworking of material. This allows for my chapters to be read through one another and for my practice to be read through this dissertation.

This methodology suits my multi-disciplinary approach of the reading of disciplines through one another – fieldwork through theory, interviews through artworks, thus resulting in qualitative analysis that brings everything together via the model of the palimpsest. Therefore, the palimpsest becomes both my theoretical and aesthetic model.

Furthermore, the layering of words and acoustic associations used by feminists such as Barad (2007), Grosz (2008), Haraway (2015) and Plumwood (1993) are an inspiring method of writing owing to the mental associations that they create, seemingly through a stream of consciousness verbalisation. This encompasses a multi-disciplinary view and is equally applicable to my study.

The palimpsest approach to writing, rewriting, working, reworking, inscribing and re-inscribing will be utilised in *conceptually* scraping away the sedimentary layers of preconception and misconception and *delving* through strata and substrata of perception and knowledge.

This methodology of palimpsest is evident in art making, in the process of painting, drawing, etching, engraving, sculpting, and modelling. It has precedents in the work of artists like South African William Kentridge (see, for example, Figure 13 for his pre-digital animated charcoal drawings that have been drawn, erased, and redrawn: they are palimpsestic in methodology, illuminated by the light of analogue). The labour of drawing and redrawing is captured frame by frame to form an animated video. The video provides an animation of the process of inscription, erasure, and re-inscription.

Figure 13: William Kentridge. *Cambio*, 1999. Charcoal.
(Tate website: Art and Artists).

10. Palimpsest as installation

At the Fifth Biennial Art History Symposium 2014: Palimpsest, the Savannah College for Art and Design Museum of Art referred to the palimpsest as the "The Layered Object":

> The media, techniques and materials of art-making are comprised of layers of knowledge. These tools contain evidence of the physical and intellectual act of creation. The art object changes with the build-up of successive layers or with the erosion of material over time. Both tangible and virtual paint covers canvas; earth subsumes artefacts; weather and environmental effects leave traces; and new layers of thought replace older conventions (SCAD Museums and Galleries 2015).
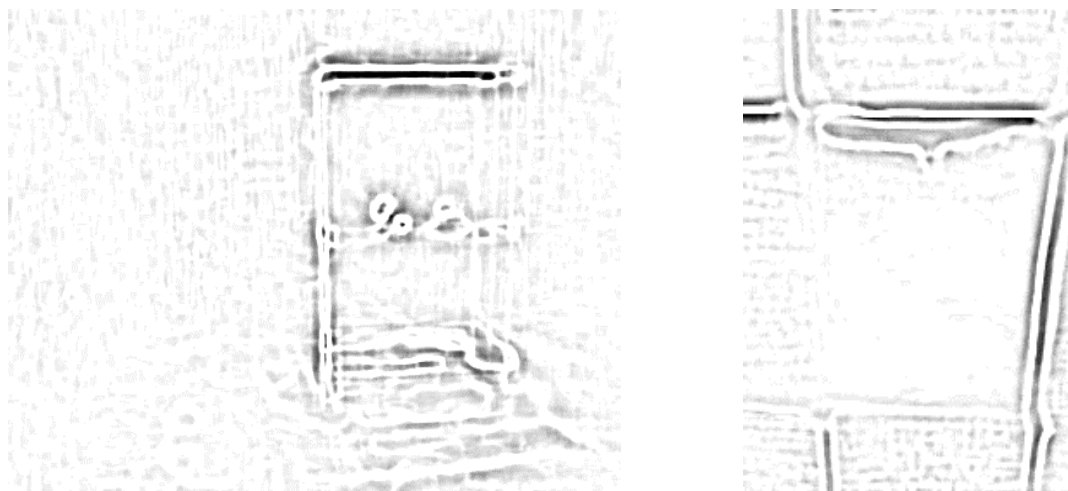

Figure 14: Gallery view of installation. (Anne Hamilton 1989), Left.
Figure 15: Anne Hamilton. *Palimpsest Experiments*. Installation. 1966. (Hirshhorn Museum & Sculpture Garden Collection, American Contemporary), Right.

Ann Hamilton's concept of a palimpsest interior as installation art is a unique approach with the viewer being within the 'cube' of the palimpsest, creating the sensation of being encapsulated (Figure 14 & Figure 15). In other words, there is no separation – or distance – between the viewer and the installation. The viewer is inside the installation, and whichever direction she or he faces, the view is different yet a repetition.

11. The object and the concept

Whilst palimpsests originated as an object created by process, it has now become the concept of the methodology and process. In both cases illumination is necessary to read the layers.

Hakim Bey says of the original palimpsest as object that "the connections between layers are not sequential in time but juxtapositional in space". He continues to say that:

> [t]he difference between a manuscript palimpsest and a theory-palimpsest is that the latter remains unfixed. It can be re-written – re-inscribed – with each new layer of accretion. And all the layers are transparent, translucent, except where clusters of inscriptions block the cabalistic light ...

Within the context of contemporary art trends, especially that of appropriation, and with an anarchistic twist, Bey continues to aver that "it would appear impossible to excuse this palimpsestic theory from the charge of a subjective and magpie-like appropriationism" (Bey 2017).

12. Conclusion

Palimpsest is determined by the progress of time, whether rapidly through drawing or coding, or slowly in the effects of geology and space. Because time is not static and constantly changing, everything is a palimpsest in process. As such, this study has become a palimpsest of itself in itself – and continues to be written and rewritten.